

THE  
TRAGEDY OF GREECE

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By  
S. P. P. COSMETATOS

Translated by  
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With a Foreword by  
CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN, M.A., B.LITT.

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## FOREWORD

BY

CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN, M.A., B.Litt.

PROPAGANDA was without doubt one of the most deadly and effective weapons during the Great War, and by propaganda I mean not only the mass of information true and false issued by belligerents for enemy and neutral consumption, but also that spoon-fed by governments to their own people. I do not propose to enter into the question whether the expedient of selecting, suppressing, and even deliberately falsifying information is defensible on the ground that it is the only means of producing the unity of purpose and sustained enthusiasm which are essential if victory is to be obtained. It may be that during a war all belligerents are bound to present facts in such a way as to justify all their actions, however questionable, in the eyes of their own people as well as in those of the outside world. Nevertheless, a time comes when it is necessary to re-examine events in the light of historical investigation and, ridding the mind of all prejudices created by war-time passions, to appraise them with a cold and critical eye.

The author of this book has endeavoured to tear away the thick veil of misrepresentation that has enveloped the part played by Greece during the War. It is, in truth, a tragic story and one which cannot be read with complacence or without a certain uneasiness either by our French allies or by ourselves. But that is not a reason why it should be suppressed; it is obvious, on the contrary, that a wrong cannot be set right so long as it remains unknown. It is true, as will appear, that Great Britain did not actually initiate the Entente policy towards Greece and occasionally even endeavoured to moderate the zeal of her too impulsive ally, but the fact that she played second fiddle to France and allowed the rights of a small nation to be cynically disregarded cannot be held to relieve her of responsibility.

## FOREWORD

It is not too much to hope that, once public opinion has been enlightened, the British people will be eager to seize the earliest opportunity of making amends to Greece for the injustice done to her, while on her part Greece will assuredly not allow her resentment to strangle the goodwill she has always felt towards Great Britain in the past.

The original version of this book was published in Paris two years ago under the title *L'Entente et la Grèce pendant la grande guerre* (Société mutuelle d'édition). It has been my privilege to assist the author in the editing and preparation of the English translation, which may virtually be regarded as a new work. The two volumes of the French edition have been compressed into one by the omission of some inessential matter, including certain portions addressed in particular to French readers. On the other hand, the book has in some measure been expanded by the incorporation of new material obtained since the publication of the French edition.

Although the chief attraction of *The Tragedy of Greece* for the reader will be the extraordinary dramatic interest of the story itself and the clear, vivid, and sincere manner in which the author has handled his theme, it may be as well, perhaps, to draw attention to and stress its value as a serious contribution to history. The author has derived a considerable proportion of his material from the original diplomatic documents preserved in the archives of the French and Greek Foreign Offices, while he has also made use of the Russian White Book published by the Bolsheviks in 1922, an important document which seems hitherto to have been neglected by writers on the War—possibly because it has never been translated into any other language. It will be noticed that documents of British origin occasionally appear in retranslation from official French translations. This was inevitable, since the British Foreign Office documents relating to these events have not been published and are not easily, if indeed at all, accessible. It is to be hoped that the competent authority may soon see fit to permit the publication in the interests of international justice. The truth can harm no one; it will on the other hand be the surest harbinger of peace and understanding.

remarkable that, although M. Cosmetatos' book excited much interest and comment in France, no one concerned has as yet attempted a sustained answer to his formidable indictment of Allied policy towards Greece during the War. After reading the book it is difficult to see how a satisfactory answer can be made. Politicians and Press stand pilloried by their own words. It is only fair, however, to emphasize that the responsibility for the outrages committed against Greece does not rest upon the French or the British people as a whole. How was the public in either country to know the truth about Greece when events were misrepresented to it, evidence was suppressed, and facts were ruthlessly distorted by presses inspired or muzzled by their respective governments? But whatever justification sophists may find in time of war for a selfishness that makes a country consider its own interests alone and reck not of the martyrdom of a small neutral nation, in time of peace there can be no excuse for such callousness. Now that once again we have ears to hear we can no longer refuse to obey the stern, calm voice of History bidding us listen with unbiassed attention to this reasoned vindication of a people and its monarch cruelly wronged.

CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN.



## PREFACE

THIS book has been written in the hope of aiding students of the World War to learn the truth on one of its outstanding episodes. Time has begun its work. Archives have been thrown open, and many of the initiated have let out secrets.

Of all the incidents arising out of the World War the case of Greece has been the most striking. It was a passionate political drama of which the hideousness was concealed under the fine phrases of the propaganda that poisoned opinion and feeling.

Historians of the future, when writing the history of the World War, will constantly have to struggle against the plausible statements and the masterpieces of camouflage invented by this propaganda. Propaganda was the weapon that counted above all others in the World War, a moral weapon of which the Allies made use in combating the lies of the enemy. Unfortunately the long duration of hostilities and the pitiless play of passions led to its excessive use. Propaganda gradually sank to a new system of sophistry, to a subtle art of persuasion; it actually took advantage of the miseries of the war to present to a world always credulous, especially when soured by long trial, a whole category of truths for bold denial, and of men to be struck down without remorse.

The belligerents in the world war never required of their propaganda agents, who were supposed to play the part of historians, that they should be fair and truthful. In the excitement of the fray they required just the opposite. Unfortunately, this habit of equivocation has been indulged in beyond its permissible time limits, and there are still difficulties in the way of any attempt to pass judgment on personalities and events of the war, otherwise than in the style that propaganda has consecrated.

## PREFACE

To-day, however, a decade after the war, it would hardly be showing consideration for future generations to cloak the truth regarding the gross errors of this war. These errors not only retarded the final victory and threw away thousands of human lives, they also brought serious moral injury in their train. What humanity has learnt through blood and tears must not be allowed to be forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Consider, for instance, the part played by the army in Salonica. If in the Spring of 1918 that half-million men, instead of being locked up at Salonica between sea, mountain, and marsh—to the immense satisfaction of Hindenburg—had been in France, Ludendorff's great offensives would incontestably have ended in the collapse of Germany at least six months earlier; to say nothing of what might have been done in the years preceding this belated expedition, which swallowed up an enormous tonnage and called for enormous services to the detriment of the main front.

As the greater part of the actors in the drama of Greece are still living, we would point out that in writing this book we are influenced by no feelings of rancour or of disappointed ambition or personal interest. Our sole object is to search out the truth as a contribution to history. Criticism will be found alongside approbation and the rehabilitation of the dead. Death would be twice as frightful if it perpetuated lies and hatred !

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find recounted in this book more than one instance of a monumental farce staged by official propagandists. It would be possible to laugh over them if they had not nearly always ended in bloodshed. Here is one more, which the reader may dwell on at once. The story of the incident has just had confirmation in the *Memoirs* (p. 173) of Count Bosdari, formerly Italian Minister in Athens, to which we shall have occasion to refer later. On 17th October, 1916, French propaganda reported in sensational terms all over the world the torpedoing of the steamship *Angheliki* at the entrance of the Piraeus, the number of victims being "considerable". The whole of the French Press showered vituperations on King Constantine for his continued neutrality in the face of the murdering of his subjects. In actual fact the *Angheliki* returned to port under her own steam. The French, however, organized an impressive funeral procession. The coffins were covered with flowers and sympathetic messages; all the Entente Ministers except Bosdari sent wreaths. The procession was a fraud; the coffins were not empty, but the corpses in them had been bought; the torpedoing was a fiction of French propaganda, aimed at shocking Greece out of her neutrality.

Those are not the most dangerous liars who lie deliberately. The most to be feared are those who propagate a lie in good faith, the sincere advocates of a detestable cause. The war has left behind it not only ruin but cruel errors, of an enormity beyond description.

The official documents, drawn from the French, Russian, and Greek archives,<sup>1</sup> and extensively quoted in the following pages, and the facts set out in chronological order from 1914 to 1917 with supporting proofs, will satisfy the reader that there was never the slightest trace of truth in the formidable charges brought against neutral Greece, during the war, in the Entente countries. The earth still quivers under the echo of this resounding accusation. Future generations looking back upon our times will speak of it with regret as the greatest falsification in world history. Never in any war, indeed, have greater ravages been caused by the cruel fury of the lie, or a more widespread infection of hatred. A mountain of false statements was raised to justify the placing of this small nation on the rack, in order to deprive it of its right to remain neutral. Even principles of law were misquoted in order to give an appearance of acting in the name of justice !

It must also be remarked, however, that the sifting out of the truth in this great intrigue is greatly complicated by the calumnies spread against Greece in the West by her own misguided sons, and those by no means the least prominent.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the generous help of certain persons in high authority in France, we have been able to publish important documents from the secret archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hitherto unpublished. We are adding in the present edition several new documents which were received subsequently to the issue of the original French edition of this work.

The secret Russian archives of this period were officially published by the Bolsheviks in 1922 in a White Book. We deal at length with this White Book, which, having been published only in Russian, has attracted no attention. The documents contained in it make revelations of poignant interest concerning the diplomatic intrigues and conspiracies of which Paris was the centre at the time.

We had access to the Greek archives shortly after the fall of M. Venizelos.

## PREFACE

But however grievous the memories of the war may be, and however violent the evil forces that still torment this old world of ours, we must make the effort to re-establish truth and justice. The honour of our generation is at stake ; but if we freely admit our errors we may hope for some indulgence before the tribunal of Posterity.

S. P. P. COSMETATOS.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>FOREWORD BY CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN, M.A., B.LITT.</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>AUTHOR'S PREFACE</b>	<b>ix</b>
 <b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>I. THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE WAR</b>	
(August, 1914–February, 1915)	
I. General situation in Greece at the outbreak of the World War	1
II. Greek feeling warmly in favour of the Entente	2
III. The Bulgarian menace. Turkish hostility	3
IV. King Constantine formally rejects the Emperor William's offers	3
V. The <i>Goeben</i> and the <i>Breslau</i>	6
VI. A furtive offer by M. Venizelos to enter the war	7
VII. Greece offers military aid to the Entente, but it is refused	7
VIII. In November M. Venizelos refuses to march to the assistance of the Serbs, but Greece sends them her stock of shell	8
IX. M. Venizelos again declines the Entente's invitation to Greece to intervene, but proposes to cede to Bulgaria the richest province of Greece, in order to win her friendship	9
 <b>II. THE DARDANELLES</b>	
(March, 1915)	
I. The Dardanelles and Greece. The diplomatic deadlock and the military disaster in which Greece would have been involved, had she intervened, proved by official and semi-official documents. Resignation of M. Venizelos	12
II. After the resignation of M. Venizelos	15
III. First violation of Greek neutrality	19

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
<b>III. GOUNARIS MINISTRY</b>	
(March–August, 1915)	
I. The Gounaris Ministry	20
II. The Greek intervention proposals to the Entente during Gounaris's term of office and King Constantine's direct offer to M Poincaré	23
III. Ill-treatment of Greece, complaisance with regard to Bulgaria	34
IV. General elections of 13th June, 1915	35
V. The Elections of 13th June constitutional	35
VI. King Constantine in vain warns the Entente of the fact of Bulgaria's alliance with the Central Powers	36
VII. The Entente ultimatum to Greece calling upon her to cede her richest province to Bulgaria Great indignation in Greece against the Entente	37
VIII. German and Entente propaganda in Greece	39
IX. The Entente powers force territorial concessions from the Serbs in favour of Bulgaria	43
X. Resignation of M. Gounaris	44
<b>IV. VENIZELOS MINISTRY</b>	
(August–October, 1915)	
I. Venizelos Ministry	45
II. King Constantine's predictions prove correct : Bulgaria mobilizes	46
III. M. Venizelos wants to enter the war at once without considering the lack of munitions and army stores	47
IV. Greece mobilizes as a precaution. In flagrant violation of the Constitution and of international law, and without the King's knowledge, M. Venizelos secretly invites the Allies to Salonica and tries to precipitate his country into the war. The King makes use of his constitutional prerogatives against M. Venizelos	50
V. French views on the Salonica expedition. Initial errors. Declarations of M Delcassé in the secret sitting of the Chamber on the 16th June, 1916	55

# CONTENTS

XV

**CHAPTER**

**PAGE**

## V. ZAIMIS MINISTRY

(October–November, 1915)

I. The Zaimis Ministry	61.
II. Benevolent neutrality	62
III. The Anglo-French armies land at Salonica	62
IV. Bulgaria declares war on Serbia. The Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance ; Greece is accused of violating it, but care is taken to avoid proving it by the publication of the text. Greece as a scapegoat	63
V. The apocryphal telegrams of M. Passaroff	68
VI. Britain offers Cyprus to Greece. The <i>Temps</i> denounces the serious delay in the dispatch of Allied troops to Salonica, and blames England for it	69
VII. General Sarrail	73
VIII. Resignation of M. Zaimis	75

## VI. THE ENTRY OF THE SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY.

(November and December, 1915)

I. The Skouloudis Cabinet	76
II. The Dissolution of the Chamber under the Skouloudis Ministry was Constitutional	78
III. Electoral conditions	81
IV. The elections of 19th December, 1915	83
V. The Skouloudis Cabinet and the Entente, first incident ; the ultimatum of 23rd November	84
VI. The application of the demands of the Entente formulated in the ultimatum of 23rd November	94
VII. Greece is under the treaties an unrestrictedly inde- pendent and sovereign State	100
VIII. M. Denys Cochin and Lord Kitchener in Greece	108
IX. The events of the beginning of December and the part played by General Sarrail	111
X. Disagreement among the Allies regarding the prose- cution of the Salonica expedition	112
XI. M. Guillemin and M. de Roquetaillfeu	114
XII. The legend of the supply of stores to the German submarines by Greece	118
XIII. The retreat of General Sarrail on Salomica	121

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIV.	By intervention in Berlin King Constantine succeeds in arresting the forces of the Central Powers at the Greek frontier ; Sarrail and the Anglo-French Army are saved from disaster	121
XV.	General de Castelnau proposes the assassination of King Constantine	124
XVI	Confirmations and revelations concerning this period contained in official Russian documents	124
XVII	Proofs of the conspiracy in official French documents (M. Venizelos's action)	127
 VII. SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY (Continuation) (January—March, 1916)		
I.	The occupation of Corfu and its legal aspect	129
II.	Castellorizo Arrest of the Consuls of the Central Powers at Salonica, Demir-Hissar and Karaburnu	134
III.	Germany warns Greece of an impending offensive against Salonica	138
IV.	Statement by King Constantine to the Associated Press and the Quai d'Orsay's reply	
V.	Various happenings in January	
VI.	Occurrences in February	
VII.	General Sarrail's visit to King Constantine	
VIII.	M. Venizelos's speeches and actions	
IX.	The Allied Secret Service in Greece	
X.	Second Plan of a German attack on Salonica	
 VIII. SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY (Conclusion) (April—June, 1916)		
I.	The Russian sacks affair	151
II.	Transportation of the Serbian army from Corfu to Salonica	155
III.	Beginning of M.	163
IV.	Events which led to the German-Bulgarian occupation of Rupel	165
V.	Action of the Allies in the Rupel affair ; Diplomatic documents ; M. Skouloudis' resignation ; Allies' ultimatum to Greece	173
VI.	Remarks on the policy of the Skouloudis cabinet.	191

## CONTENTS

xvii

**CHAPTER**

**PAGE**

### **IX. SECOND ZAIMIS MINISTRY**

(June—September, 1916)

I.	Zaimis Ministry	195
II.	Evidence of M. Zaimis before the chairman of the Council of War (4th February, 1919)	196
III.	Mission of Prince Nicholas and Prince Andrew of Greece to Petrograd and London	200
IV.	German-Bulgarian offensive in Macedonia, invasion of Eastern Macedonia and internment in Germany of the Fourth Greek Army Corps	200
V.	Aggressive speech of M. Venizelos at Athens and Venizelist pronunciamento at Salonica	204
VI.	The Allied fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, arrives in sight of Athens	207
VII	Outrage arranged by the French naval attaché against the French Legation in Athens, with a view to incriminating Greece	209
VIII.	The burning of Tatoi	212

### **X. KALOGEROPOULOS MINISTRY**

(16th September—4th October, 1916)

I.	Formation of the Kalogeropoulos Ministry	214
II.	Vain efforts of the new Cabinet to enter into negotiations with the Entente for the intervention of Greece	215
III.	M. Venizelos, supported by certain Allied authorities, goes to Crete and thence to Salonica in order to organize rebellion and civil war	219
IV.	Control of the Telegraphs	225

### **XI. LAMBROS MINISTRY**

(October, 1916—May, 1917)

I.	The Lambros Ministry	227
II.	Disagreements amongst the Allies. Sequestration of the Greek Fleet by the French. Military Controls. Installation of French detachments at Athens	228
III.	Evidence of Russian archives on the events of October	234

## CHAPTER

IV.	De Roquelaure and Sarrail tax their ingenuity in totally disarming neutral Greece. Successful intervention of M Benazet at Athens. Seizure of the Greek fleet by the French. The Ekaterini incident. General Roeques at Athens	236
V	Sequence of events which led to the skirmish on 1st December, 1916	243
VI.	The eve of 1st December. A few incidents M. Venizelos' duplicity	249
VII	The skirmish of 1st December miscalled an ambush	252
VIII	The day after the skirmish. The period from December, 1916, to May, 1917	259
IX	The White Books of M. Venizelos	273
 XII. THE THIRD ZAIMIS MINISTRY (May 4-June 26, 1917)		
I	Before the dethronement of King Constantine	274
II.	M. Jonnart "High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers". Deposition of King Constantine	277
III.	After the deposition of King Constantine. M. Jonnart's contradictions and admissions ; he imposes M. Venizelos on the "liberated Greek People" as dictator and tyrant	289
IV.	After M. Jonnart's departure from Greece	295
 SUMMARY OF EVENTS FROM 1917 TO 1923		298
 CONCLUSION		316
 INDEX		325

# THE TRAGEDY OF GREECE.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE WAR

(*August, 1914–February, 1915*)

General situation in Greece at the outbreak of the world war.—Greek feeling warmly in favour of the Entente.—The Bulgarian menace.—Turkish hostility—King Constantine formally rejects the Emperor William's offers—The *Goeben* and the *Breslau*.—A furtive offer by M. Venizelos to enter the war.—Greece offers military aid to the Entente, but it is refused—In November M. Venizelos refuses to march to the assistance of the Serbs, but Greece sends them her stock of shell—M. Venizelos again declines the Entente's invitation to Greece to intervene, but proposes to cede to Bulgaria the richest province of Greece, in order to win her friendship.

## I

At the time of the outbreak of the world war Greece enjoyed an internal peace such as had been rarely known in her history. The Hellenic people were unanimous in the support of their king, King Constantine, in whom the Balkan wars had revealed an intelligent soldier and an able leader of men. The great victory of Kilkitch (1913), of which the king and his general staff had been the bold and clear-headed organizers, had made the sovereign the idol of the nation. But for this victory over the Bulgarians, indeed, all the sacrifices the country had made and all the efforts of M. Venizelos himself would have been in vain ; they would even have ended in disaster. M. Venizelos had been so unwilling to undertake the risks of a second Balkan war that in spite of the contrary advice of the general staff, he was ready to make large territorial concessions to the

Bulgarians. M. Venizelos has admitted this in the Chamber, stating that it was only unwillingly that he resigned himself to the second Balkan war.

M. Venizelos had been Prime Minister for four years. He had rendered great services to the country and had been able to rally to his party an important majority. He had great qualities as a statesman and a diplomat; unfortunately his fine qualities were more than outweighed by grave defects of character. The violent fratricidal struggles which Greece has had to suffer since 1915 offer striking proofs of this. The reader will be able to form his own judgment from the documents and the detailed exposition of facts that we give in chronological order in this work.

## II

Greek public opinion made no secret of its attitude from the very commencement of hostilities. Its first care was that the country should remain as far as possible untouched by the European conflagration. If, however, the vital interests of Greece should so demand, and if her King and Minister should so advise her, she was ready to range herself on the side of the Entente, and take part in the hostilities. We say definitely on the side of the Entente, for no Greek could be foolish enough for one moment to recommend that Greece—a maritime State—should enter the war in opposition to those who held command of the seas: that would have been suicidal.

Enormous material interests, on which the economic existence of Greece was dependent, bound her to the Entente. No such interest attached her to Germany. There was therefore no Greek to be found who would say a word on behalf of Germany. Not a man could be found in Greece who could be called pro-German. Under these circumstances, by what strange perversion of facts can it have come about that Greece has been accused of being on Germany's side? The reader will understand this when, after reading this work, his eyes are opened to the deep intrigue set on foot, to the injury of this little country, with the object of descating its desire to remain neutral in the terrible war.

## III

In August, 1914, the foreign policy of Greece was dominated by two exceedingly grave preoccupations—the Bulgarian menace and the hostility of Turkey. The former was due to an astonishing collective aberration on the part of the Bulgarians. They had acquired a terrible hatred of the Serbs and the Greeks, who were but recently their allies, but against whom they had committed one of the blackest deeds in all history. The Treaty of Bucarest, a severe but just settlement of the fratricidal war that they themselves had started, revolted them. They had only one consolation, the dream of revenge.

The hostility of the Turks was the outcome of the Treaty of Athens (1st/14th November, 1913); the Sublime Porte obstinately refused to recognize the annexation to Greece of the isles ceded to her by the Treaty of London.<sup>1</sup> It accumulated excessive naval armaments and allowed it to be clearly understood that these preparations were directed against the Greek islands. Further, the continual outrages suffered by the Greeks in Turkey rendered a conflict between Greece and Turkey almost inevitable.

## IV

On the outbreak of hostilities in the West a Council of Ministers was held, presided over by the King himself. After this Council King Constantine and M. Venizelos were in entire agreement that: (1) Benevolent neutrality should be maintained towards the Entente, to which Greece was attached by important interests; and (2) the clauses of the Greco-Serbian defensive Treaty of Alliance should be rigorously observed in the event of a Bulgarian attack on Serbia. On this last point the Greek White Book, published by M. Venizelos himself, is explicit.<sup>2</sup>

As to the private views of King Constantine, they are made sufficiently clear by the revelations contained in the Kautsky Documents and by the White Book of M. Venizelos.

<sup>1</sup> 30th May, 1913, and exchange of notes

<sup>2</sup> Telegrams Nos 14 and 15, *Livre Blanc grec*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1918.

## THE TRAGEDY OF GREECE

On 31st July, 1914, the Emperor William telegraphed to his brother-in-law Constantine<sup>1</sup> :—

No 504 Telegram 104 Urgent

BERLIN, 31st July, 1914

The Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Chargé d'Affaires at Athens, transmitting the reply of Emperor William to the King of Greece

I beg you to lay the contents of the following dispatch orally before H M the King

"I thank you heartily for your telegram, forwarded by Bassewitz, which greatly reassured me I still hold that an arrangement between Greece and Turkey would be good policy, and shall continue to do my utmost to assist that end

"So long as the conflict between Austria and Serbia remains localized it is evident that no intervention can be admitted either by Turkey or Bulgaria. But if a general European conflagration results all the Balkan States will be obliged to choose what part they will take. I take it that, as is only natural, remembering how your father fell at the hands of the assassin, you will not take part against myself and the Triple Alliance in favour of the Serbian assassins. Further, in view of the military interests of Greece, it seems to me that every indication points to the place at my side as being the right one for your country and dynasty. Serbia herself, who, even with the aid of Greece, would be unable to maintain her position, will realize that *force majeure* has prevailed in determining the policy of Greece. No one has followed with greater pleasure than I the admirable progress that Greece has made under your rule. No better opportunity has ever offered itself to Greece for freeing herself once for all, under the protection of the Triple Alliance, from the overlordship that Russia claims to exercise over the Balkan peninsula.

"If, contrary to my expectations, you range yourself with our opponents, Greece will be exposed to simultaneous attack by Italy, Bulgaria, and Turkey, and our personal relations will suffer for all time. I have spoken frankly, and I beg you to communicate your decision without delay in the same perfectly frank spirit "

Please avoid a written communication.

JAGOW

<sup>1</sup> Kautsky Documents, edited in 1919 by Count Montgelas and Dr W. Schücking under the title *Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch*

## FIRST MONTHS OF THE WAR 5

On 2nd August King Constantine replied to Emperor William by telegram as follows. The marginal notes written by the Emperor show how deeply annoyed he was :-

No 702 Telegram 231

ATHENS, 2nd August, 1914

*Marginal Notes by  
Emperor William*

Inform Athens that I have formed an alliance with Turkey and Bulgaria in view of a war with Russia and that *I shall treat Greece as an enemy if she does not join this alliance immediately* : I have just said so to Theotokis personally, at the same time informing him of our alliance with Turkey and Bulgaria.

Impossible

This is not the point  
The Balkans are moving !

If Greece does not immediately join cause with us she will lose her position as a Balkan power and will no longer be supported by us in her aspirations, but regarded as an enemy. It is not a question of the Balkan equilibrium but of common action by the Balkan States with the object of freeing the peninsula once for all from Russian influence.

The King of the Hellenes to the Emperor.

H M the King has forwarded the following dispatch to me desiring that it may be laid before H M the Emperor William

"Sincere thanks for your telegram and promise of support in the matter of the agreement with Turkey. It has never entered our head to go to the aid of the Serbs ; but it appears to me to be equally impossible for me to make common cause with their enemies and to attack them, seeing that they are our allies. It seems to me that the interests of Greece demand that she should observe absolute neutrality and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans as created by the treaty of Bucarest. If we abandoned this point of view Bulgaria would be able to enlarge her borders by the annexation of Serbian Macedonia, to extend along our borders as far as Albania, and to constitute for us an enormous danger. I have no guarantee that this will not happen. These considerations compel us to preserve neutrality and to do all we can in co-operation with Roumania to prevent Bulgaria from entering the war. You know my opinion of the Slavs and also on the question of Russian domination in the Balkans. These views are shared by all my people, and if Bulgaria were to gain this increase of power the equilibrium of our corner of the globe would be destroyed, the preponderance of the Slav would indeed have been created --CONSTANTINE."

BASSEWITZ

Finally, replying to his imperial brother-in-law on 7th August, 1914, King Constantine politely but categorically refused to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers. He had the following telegram sent to them —

*However, I cannot possibly see how I could help him in any way by mobilizing my army. . . The Mediterranean is at the mercy of the combined British and French fleets. . . without being able to render him any assistance, we should be wiped off the map<sup>1</sup>*

This refusal by Constantine, countersigned by M. Streit, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is particularly worthy of note, since the urgent requests of the Emperor William were preceded by the formal assurance from Berlin that Turkey and Bulgaria were already the allies of the Central Powers. This is proved by the Greek White Book.<sup>2</sup> During the war the French censorship systematically prevented any allusion to this important dispatch.

## V

On the outbreak of war Serbia appealed to Greece for military aid, on the strength of the Greco-Serbian alliance. But M. Venizelos had no difficulty in pointing out to the Serbian Government that there was no *casus foederis*.

We must here draw attention to an incident which at this period had great influence on the entry of Turkey into the war, and which moreover was malignantly distorted and for a long time made use of against Greece during the period of her neutrality.

On 6th August, 1914, M. Venizelos stated to the Council of Ministers that he had been awakened at 2 a.m. by the German Minister in Athens, who had come urgently to seek authorization to coal two German *merchant vessels*. M. Venizelos said that he had granted the request although he knew that the coal was intended for the *Goeben* and the

<sup>1</sup> *Livre Blanc grec*, 1917 (French translation), Doc. No 21, page 52. This White Book is a one-sided account. M. Venizelos suppressed a whole series of important telegrams, some of which are irreconcilable with his statements.

<sup>2</sup> See *Livre Blanc grec*, Docs. 19 and 20.

*Breslau*, which were then being pursued by the Anglo-French fleet, and he added : " As, only the other day, we revictualled some of the Allies' war vessels, I felt that we should be failing in our duty as neutrals if we refused the same service to the Germans."

The matter remained at that. A little later on, however, M. Venizelos did not hesitate to make of it a treasonable crime and to impute it to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Streit, who had just resigned and whom he wished to compromise in the eyes of the Entente.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

On 1st/14th August, 1914, M. Venizelos, without the knowledge of the King or the Cabinet, put the following inexplicable question to the Entente Legation in Athens : " If Greece were to go to the aid of Serbia and to attack Bulgaria, would she be looked upon by the Entente as an ally ? " To this question, put, so to speak, at pistol-point, the Entente never replied.

## VII

On 18th August, 1914, M. Venizelos stated in the Council of Ministers that he had formed the conviction that the war would terminate in *three weeks' time* in the complete defeat of the Central Powers. As it was important that Greece should be among the victors he proposed to offer Greek military assistance to France and Britain. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Streit, asked that a second meeting of the Council should be convened in the afternoon to go into the question more thoroughly, but M. Venizelos replied that the imminence of the victory of the Entente did not permit of even a few hours' delay. This was the cause of M. Streit's resignation.

That very day M. Venizelos went to Sir Francis Elliot, the British Minister, and to M. Deville, the French Minister in Athens, and placed the Greek army at the disposal of the Entente ; and this without any restriction or condition as to the task that Greece would have to perform or the compensation that she should receive in the event of victory.

<sup>1</sup> See the letter from M. Streit in the Paris *Temps* of 1st December, 1915.

Mr. Winston Churchill, in his book *The World Crisis*, confirms this incredible action, by which M. Venizelos offered, especially to Britain, the modest military and naval resourcées of Greece.

M. Venizelos offered, in fact, to join the Allies as an act of grace, as M. Deville, then French Minister in Athens, put it.<sup>1</sup> The reply this time came promptly. The Entente thanked Greece, but thought that for the present it was not desirable that there should be any extension of the war in the Balkans.

### VIII

Weeks and months passed, but events did not confirm M. Venizelos' prognostications.

When Austria launched her great offensive against Serbia in November, 1914, the Entente, feeling that a critical moment had come, took advantage of Greece's offer of 18th August to ask her to send an army to the assistance of Serbia. M. Venizelos had no difficulty, however, in showing the Allies that it would be madness for Greece to do so. What was asked of Greece was that she should send her armies 400 kilometres beyond her frontiers without consideration of their communications, which would remain exposed for hundreds of kilometres—in Macedonia—to a Bulgarian attack. It was known in Athens that the Bulgarians were already the allies of the Central Powers, but Paris and London obstinately refused to admit the fact. M. Venizelos and the general staff accordingly made Greek consent conditional on the active co-operation of Bulgaria and also of Roumania; and this the Entente could not guarantee.

So far as appearances went, Greece continued to remain neutral. At Salonica, however, with the co-operation of the Greek authorities, a great Serbian supply depot had been established. Finally, at the time of the great Austrian offensive in November, King Constantine sanctioned the loan to Serbia of nearly the whole of the stock of shells in the hands of the Greek artillery. This was done to save the Serbs,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Entente la Grèce et la Bulgarie* By Gabriel Deville, former French Minister in Athens, E. Figuière et Cie, Paris, p. 119.

who were short of munitions and were retreating precipitately before the Austrians. The service which Greece rendered to the cause of the Entente on this occasion was inestimable, for the Allies were still short of munitions. "A week after the disaster," wrote M. Deville,<sup>1</sup> "the 20,000 shells had arrived; the Serbian soldiers knelt and crossed themselves before the waggons as before their Icons; the struggle was renewed, and everyone knows with what spirit the Serbs compelled the Austrians to retreat more quickly than they had come." Neutral Greece thus played an important part in the Serbian victory.

In connexion with this matter there is a fact that should not be lost sight of. The shells given to Serbia were subsequently made good to Greece by France. On the delivery of the shells, however, the Greek authorities pointed out that almost the whole of these were not of the right calibre for the Greek artillery. Urgent complaint was made, but the Greek Legation in Paris received the reply that they only wanted—filing! This grave incident should not be lost sight of, for :

A year later, at the time of the German-Bulgarian invasion of Serbia, the Entente asked Greece to enter the war at a day's notice, forgetting that they themselves had ruined Greece's small store of munitions. And it will be seen later on that the suddenness and rapidity of the German-Bulgar march in the autumn of 1915, and the inadequacy of the Allied production of munitions, prevented this lamentable error from being repaired in time.

Two years later, in 1916, this sabotage of artillery gave the French Government grounds for fearing that Sarrail was in grave peril.<sup>2</sup>

## IX

On 11th January, 1915,<sup>3</sup> Sir Edward Grey informed M. Venizelos that if Greece went to the aid of the Serbs,

<sup>1</sup> Deville, *op cit*, pp. 136-7

<sup>2</sup> "This description appears to me to be absolutely exact, and your remark very just," wrote Admiral Dartige du Fournet to us in 1921, he was Commander-in-Chief of the Allied fleet in the Near East at the period in question.

<sup>3</sup> This communication ended in the move of 24th January See Deville, *op cit*, p. 128.

who were at that time in great danger from a new Austrian attack, the Allies would be willing to guarantee her important acquisitions in the Greek coastal regions of Asia Minor. Sir Edward Grey's offer was intentionally vague regarding these acquisitions; the British statesmen had wisely abstained from disposing of territories not yet in their possession. M. Venizelos, while appreciating the eventual compensations offered to Greece, declined the proposal for reasons similar to those put forward in November. Speaking to Sir F. Elliot, he described the Entente's request as "absurd" so long as the attitude of Bulgaria remained uncertain and Roumania still hesitant.

Finally the Entente made a third attempt, on 15th February, 1915, to persuade M. Venizelos to send help to the Serbs. M. Venizelos refused for the same reasons as before.<sup>1</sup>

These three refusals,<sup>2</sup> although determined by the logic of necessity, caused considerable bitterness in Paris and London against M. Venizelos. In London, indeed, there was a good deal of talk of "the evasions of M. Venizelos".

Under these conditions M. Venizelos' only means of rehabilitating himself was to become the pivot of the reconstitution of the Balkan League—so much desired by the Entente—and to endeavour to induce Bulgaria to come in by means of a cession of Greek territory. This conception, itself due to a sudden bellicose impulse, led M. Venizelos to address to the King two confidential letters in which he proposed to cede to Bulgaria, the hereditary enemy of Greece, the richest province of his country—the Macedonian district of Drama-Cavalla—as the price of Bulgaria's active participation in the war on the side of the Allies; Greece eventually receiving in Asia Minor the cession of an area which he was pleased to estimate (without the knowledge of the Entente) at 125,000 square kilometres.

It was on this occasion that in order to safeguard the persons and property of the Greeks living in the district

<sup>1</sup> Deville, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> See in Crawford Price, *Light on the Balkan Darkness*, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1915, pp. 53 and 54, a balanced justification of these refusals

to be ceded to Bulgaria, M. Venizelos first conceived the inhuman idea of the forcible exchange of populations, an idea of which he subsequently secured approval at Lausanne, and which has brought the Greeks more ruin and misery than a long and costly war.

M. Venizelos' proposal was venturesome and full of danger ; the discussion of any dismemberment of Greece once opened it would have been a difficult matter to set limits to it. The unpopularity of any such idea in Greece would have been certain, and it was well known that it would not have been easy to induce the Bulgarians to rest content with it. The King kept M. Venizelos informed of the farce by means of which Berlin and Sofia were putting Entente diplomacy on the wrong track. M. Venizelos, realizing the inherent danger of his proposals, allowed them to drag on. He had not long to wait. At the end of February it was suddenly learned in Athens that a powerful offensive was about to be launched by the Allies against the Dardanelles, with the object of occupying Constantinople and making an end of Turkey. This news caused an immense sensation throughout Greece, for now the war was brought to the very heart of *Graecia irredenta*.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DARDANELLES

(*March, 1915*)

The Dardanelles and Greece —The diplomatic deadlock and the military disaster in which Greece would have been involved had she intervened, proved by official and semi-official documents —Resignation of M Venizelos —After the resignation of M Venizelos. —First violation of Greek neutrality

#### I

The news of the Dardanelles expedition had hardly reached Athens, at the end of February, when M. Venizelos, obeying some sort of autosuggestion or impulse of purely psychic origin, suddenly became a strategist. Disregarding the warnings of his technical advisers and all consideration of the Turks' powers of offence, or their topographical advantages and means of defence, he formed the opinion that the taking of the Dardanelles, the end of Turkey, and even the end of the war, were *only a question of days*! Under these circumstances, he declared, there was not a moment to be lost; in order that she might be numbered among the victors Greece must at all costs immediately join in the Entente expedition.

We know only too well what was the outcome of this adventure. It ended in disaster! And this was due, as will be seen later on, to the blunders of the British Admiralty. The British, with praiseworthy frankness, admitted in 1915 semi-officially, and later on officially, all their errors, laying the whole blame on their naval and military authorities.

M. Venizelos alone has attempted to throw doubt on what had been admitted by generals, by courts of inquiry, and by British publicists. He has claimed that had his advice been listened to by King Constantine in March, 1915, and had Greece sent but a single division to the Dardanelles, the

Straits would have been forced, Constantinople taken, Turkey destroyed, the Black Sea ports unlocked, and victory achieved by the Entente two years sooner, thanks to Greece. That would have gained for Greece a prestige unequalled in all the world ! Regarded as oratory, this speech left nothing to be desired, but all these assertions collapse like a card castle when they are examined in the light of the facts.

At this moment, as a matter of fact, M. Venizelos, swayed by his "presentiments", secured the convocation of two Crown Councils (on 3rd and 5th March) with the object of discussing and securing the approval of Greece's immediate participation in the Dardanelles expedition.

In the first of these Councils M. Venizelos proposed to offer the Triple Entente assistance from Greece to the extent of her fleet and one army corps. In the second he reduced his proposal to the sending of the fleet and only a division. He expected, as a matter of fact, that Greece's participation in the Dardanelles operations would be no more than a formality, the forces sent by Britain and France being sufficient.

It is evident, however, from the official minutes<sup>1</sup> that M. Venizelos was very undecided at this period. At the first Crown Council, impressed by the technical objections of the general staff, he advised the King to address to his "German relatives" a request for some return for the maintenance of neutrality by Greece. He even added that in this case, in order to avoid the appearance of inconsistency, he would resign but would discreetly support his successor in Parliament. He invited the King to address himself immediately in this sense to the German Minister in Athens, adding that he attached great practical value to dissembled *pourparlers* between sovereigns, made in appearance behind the back of the Government constitutionally responsible.

At the second Crown Council, according to the same official minutes of proceedings, M. Venizelos declared that his *psychical condition* was not the same as it was two days

<sup>1</sup> The account here given of these two Crown Councils is based on the minutes of proceedings now in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Athens.

previously, when he was impressed by the advice of the general staff. He now felt that he must insist on the sending of one Greek division to the Dardanelles. His great was Britain's alleged interest in seeing Greece establish herself at Smyrna ; and he informed the King that he withdrew his promise to give support in Parliament to any neutralist Government that might succeed him. However, he *...!...!*, recognized the right of the Crown to form a new Government without consulting the Chamber. He advised the King, however, to dissolve the Chamber in this case, since, as leader of the majority, he could not support a Government that would follow a policy contrary to his views.

At the last moment, however, a prey, no doubt, to a sudden delusion, M. Venizelos became all at once rashly bellicose, and declared angrily that he would resign if his proposal to take part in the Dardanelles expedition was rejected by the King. And as the King feared the venture M. Venizelos noisily resigned. This intransigent attitude was the more surprising seeing that the news of the Anglo-French military preparations which reached Athens on 4th March were far from reassuring.<sup>1</sup>

In his obstinate pursuit of a policy of sudden intervention, based not on the real and evident facts of the case but upon conjectures, M. Venizelos was rushing into a double catastrophe, diplomatic and military.

#### *Diplomatic Catastrophe*

(1) On 6th March, Britain, France, and Russia signed a *secret* treaty giving Constantinople and the Straits to the last mentioned in full sovereignty, and entirely excluding Greece from these seas, regardless of her historic and ethnical rights, which go back twenty-five centuries.<sup>2</sup> If on 6th March the King had accepted the advice of M. Venizelos, the Greek nation would have been called upon to shed its purest blood

<sup>1</sup> M. Venizelos said to Colonel Metaxas, second in command of the Staff. "I know that my proposals are bold, but I insist, for I have confidence in my star!"

<sup>2</sup> See the Secret Treaties of the Tsarist Government, published by the Bolsheviks. c Hanson, *Diplomatie Secrète*.

in order to make of its ancient capital, Byzantium—the centre of world civilization for ten centuries—Tsarigrad !

(2) On the eve of his resignation M. Venizelos had communicated to Britain, France, and Russia the proposals that he had just made to the Crown Council and, relying prematurely upon a favourable decision, had semi-officially requested these three Powers to accept the collaboration of *Greek military forces* against the Dardanelles.<sup>1</sup>

The replies of the three Powers had been drawn up and forwarded some hours before M. Venizelos' resignation, but did not reach Athens until after it ; they were instructive.

*France replied that she accepted the participation of Greece on the condition that it was unlimited, and that Greek forces should not be used exclusively against the Dardanelles but wherever the common interest should require.*

*Britain intimated that she would accept the participation of Greece provided that the King was in agreement with the views of M. Venizelos on this point.*

*Russia declared that her public opinion was deeply moved by the news that there was a possibility of the collaboration of a Greek army with the British and French forces against the Dardanelles. Such collaboration was unacceptable to Russia, in view of the immediate neighbourhood of Constantinople. The Russian note terminated by requesting Greece to give clear explanations as to this.<sup>2</sup>*

The following are the grounds on which Russia made her energetic protest. M. A. Gauvain wrote in the leading article of the *Journal des Débats* of 28th September, 1918 :—

In the last issue of the *Asie Française* M. Robert de Caix published the Bolshevik text of agreements made in 1915 and 1917 by Russia, Britain, and France regarding Turkey. These had already been reproduced by the *Pavda*, but the French Government had not thought fit to authorize publication. The starting point is the Dardanelles expedition of 1915. On learning that France and

<sup>1</sup> See M. Venizelos' telegram, No. 1905, to the Greek Legations in London, Paris and Petrograd, dated March 5. Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> M. Gounaris reminded M. Venizelos of these three rejections at the sitting of the Chamber on 3rd October, 1915.

Britain intended to strike a blow at Turkey in the Straits, a blow that would be felt as far as Constantinople, the Cabinet at Petrograd was concerned to safeguard what it called Russian interests. It not only raised *categorical objections against the military co-operation of Greece*, objections which contributed largely to the failure of the expedition, but it demanded that the Cabinets of Paris and London should recognize enormous Russian rights over European and Asiatic Turkey . In plain language, in 1915 and 1917 Russian diplomacy exercised a pressure on us that might fairly be described as *chantage* (blackmail). It told us that Russian soldiers would fight no more except for Constantinople! And that if we persisted in our ill-timed objections it would no longer be able to answer for the armies of the Tsar.

It is certain that had M. Venizelos been more circumspect and awaited the replies from the Allies before resigning, he could not, after such replies, have persisted in his policy of intervention. But unluckily M. Venizelos had invented a chimera and he persisted in following it in face of the most elementary dictates of wisdom.

#### *Military Catastrophe*

During the second Crown Council, as already mentioned, M. Venizelos reduced his demand to a single division, say 12,000 to 15,000 men.

The King, however, in agreement with the general staff, said that in his opinion the taking of the Dardanelles by a fleet seemed virtually an impossibility, whatever the British Admiralty might think. The agreed opinion of himself and his staff was that the Straits could only be forced by a simultaneous attack on land and sea.

However, in January, 1915, the Greek general staff—so much disparaged in the sequel—gave distinct proof of its pro-Entente feeling ; it entrusted confidentially to Admiral Kerr, chief of the British naval mission at Athens, a detailed Greek study of the means of attack on the Dardanelles. This study, elaborated in 1912–13, and held in reserve ever since, came to the conclusion that the forcing of the Dardanelles required the combined action of a fleet and of an army exceptionally strong numerically, and equipped with the heaviest artillery.

The King, without in any way rejecting in principle the idea of joining with the Entente, refused to participate in this enterprise, which he believed was destined to failure from the outset. M. Venizelos, however, confident of the imminent fall of the Dardanelles, refused to accept the wise view of the King. He was so afraid of seeing the Dardanelles taken without the co-operation of Greece, that at the moment of his resignation on the evening of 6th March the Greek squadron was under steam, ready to go into action that same night, and this in spite of the fact that the smaller vessels and the cruisers *Kilkich* and *Lemnos* were almost entirely without ammunition.

Ten years have passed since then. Thanks to the publicity given by the British Government to the reports of its generals, and to those of the Royal Commission of Inquiry, the historian is able now to scrutinize the facts, fix responsibilities and draw conclusions.

We shall only mention here the most important documents that appeared in Britain on this subject. They are :—

*Official Report of Sir Ian Hamilton, General Commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, to the War Office (period 17th March to 5th May, 1915), published in the London Gazette, 6th July, 1915.*

Sir Ian Hamilton arrived at Tenedos on 17th March. After a brief exchange of views with General d'Amade and the admirals, it was decided to proceed immediately to the attack. But to Sir Ian's astonishment, he discovered on that same day that the trimming of nearly all his transports was so defective that the disembarking of war material at sea was a practical impossibility ! He was obliged therefore to give up all idea of disembarking and to apply himself urgently to a new and reconsidered trimming of the vessels ; Sir Ian Hamilton calls this a "redistribution".

*Official Report of the British Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Dardanelles Expedition.*

This Report is a crucial document on the question under consideration. It comes to the conclusion that apart from numerous technical blunders, the attack on the Dardanelles was undertaken too late, at the most unfavourable moment,

and with insufficient supplies. The expedition was more than an error, it was almost a crime.

It is important to note that nowhere in this report is any suggestion made that the maintenance of Greek neutrality can have contributed to the failure of the expedition. With exemplary frankness the report throws the entire responsibility for this reverse upon England alone.

## II

Thanks to the confirmations and corrections contained in the British official reports and the recent revelations by various prominent British personalities, the history of the Dardanelles expedition may be considered as fully known. The facts are definitely established. No doubt can exist regarding the causes of the reverse. M. Venizelos, a misguided visionary, encroached upon the domains of strategy, which were outside his competence, and tendered his resignation on 6th March rather than accept the advice of the general staff.

On the evening of his resignation M. Venizelos, deeply moved and in consternation, he said, at the destruction of all his hopes, announced his retirement from public life! . . . Subsequent events proved that this heroic resolution was merely a manœuvre in home policy, aimed at winning over the undecided members of the public. No doubt he hoped thereby to intensify popular sympathy for himself on the approaching day, when, as he expected, the Dardanelles would have fallen, and the nation, exasperated by the policy of inaction imposed by the King, would come in patriotic enthusiasm to bring him back from the depths of his retirement, and bear him triumphantly to power.

But days and weeks passed, and the visions of M. Venizelos were not realized. He was deeply mortified by the failure of all his predictions. This fact must be recognized as one of the chief causes of the attitude of M. Venizelos towards his King. The great popularity that Constantine won in Greece by his opposition to the disastrous Dardanelles expedition disturbed the soul of the Cretan politician.

The resignation of M. Venizelos was the subject of regretful comment in the Entente Press, especially in the French papers. Its underlying diplomacy, however, was allowed to remain in the dark ; the censor was on the watch. The orders to the Press were : High praise for M. Venizelos, consecrated from this moment as “an illustrious and eminent statesman”, and discreet insinuations of German influence at the court of Greece—not as yet “with the King of Greece”.

Not a word in these articles concerning the military aspect of the question—the one and only cause of the breach between the King and M. Venizelos.

### III

In closing this chapter it will be well to recall the fact that at the outset of the operations of the Allies against Turkey Greece allowed them to occupy the islands of Lemnos, Tenedos, and Imbros, and later on Mytilene, which were to serve them as *military bases* against the Dardanelles.

From the point of view of international law, the Allied occupation of Imbros and of Tenedos was not altogether unjustifiable, as the definite status of these islands, occupied by Greece since 1912, had not been fixed. The others formed an integral part of the Kingdom of Greece. Their occupation by the Allies constituted, therefore, a clear violation of Articles 1 and 2 of the Fifth Hague Convention, the first Article laying down that “the territory of neutral Powers is inviolable”, and the second that “belligerents are forbidden to move across the territory of a neutral Power troops or convoys, either of munitions of war or of supplies”

## CHAPTER III

### GOUNARIS MINISTRY

(*March–August, 1915*)

The Gounaris Ministry—The Greek intervention proposals to the Entente during Gounaris's term of office, and King Constantine's direct offer to M. Poincaré—Ill-treatment of Greece, complaisance with regard to Bulgaria—General election of 13th June, 1915—The elections of 13th June constitutional—King Constantine in vain warns the Entente of the fact of Bulgaria's alliance with the Central Powers—The Entente ultimatum to Greece calling upon her to cede her richest province to Bulgaria—Great indignation in Greece against the Entente—German and Entente propaganda in Greece—The Entente Powers force territorial concessions from the Serbs in favour of Bulgaria—Resignation of M. Gounaris.

#### I

The inopportune resignation of M. Venizelos placed King Constantine in a very embarrassing position ; the choice of his successor was no easy matter. If, for instance, the King called the Opposition to power his action, although constitutional, might be interpreted by the Entente as a sudden change in the foreign policy of Greece. This was just what the King wished to avoid, as he felt that the friendship of the Entente was of vital importance to Greece. He therefore offered the premiership to M. Zaimis, a man of integrity, standing outside party politics. M. Zaimis accepted on condition that M. Venizelos would support him in the Chamber. M. Venizelos at once acquiesced, and M. Zaimis began to form his Cabinet, but the same evening M. Venizelos, who had altered his mind, informed him by letter, in terms not very amiable towards him or towards the King, that he withdrew his support. Under these conditions M. Zaimis had to give up his task.

After M. Zaimis the King invited M. Skouloudis to take over the direction of affairs, but he refused, owing to his very poor state of health.

The King was thus obliged to appeal to the Opposition and offered the premiership to M. Gounaris, Député for Patras, a new man, and one, therefore, against whom there could be no prejudice in regard to his foreign policy. After M. Venizelos he had the largest following in the Chamber.

As soon as M. Gounaris had formed his Cabinet, on 10th March, he hastened to make the express declaration that no change whatever would be made in the foreign policy of Greece, and that his Government would proceed on the same lines as its predecessor in its dealings with the Entente. As will be seen later, he kept scrupulously to this promise. Two tasks imposed themselves on the Gounaris Cabinet from the outset : to settle definitely the foreign policy of Greece, and to put her internal affairs in order constitutionally by an early General Election. The former matter being by far the most urgent for the country, was for many weeks, as was only right, the one care of the Government. After a careful examination of the international situation, the Government arrived, in agreement with the King, at the conclusion that if the Entente agreed to guarantee Greece against the Bulgarian menace, it would be to the interest of Greece immediately to enter the war. On this basis Greece made several successive proposals for intervention, of which more will be said later on ; unhappily they came up against the extravagant pro-Bulgarian feelings of the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office.

Unhappily, too, an incident in internal politics contributed to upset the negotiations proceeding between Greece and the Entente. M. Gounaris, in a note to the Press at the end of March, on the subject of the policy of his Government, declared :—

We are labouring to avert the Bulgarian peril without making concessions that others would perhaps not have judged incompatible with the interests of the country

M. Gounaris referred here to M. Venizelos' confidential memoranda to the King. No doubt the allusion was

inopportune, but M. Venizelos, carried away by an anger hardly compatible with the political virtues on which he prided himself, recklessly published to clear himself the entire text of his memoranda. His purpose, he said, was to prove that he had only envisaged by way of pure speculation the cessions of territory which he was charged with proposing. This publication, interpreted in Paris, London, and Petrograd in a pro-Bulgar sense, gained immense popularity for M. Venizelos in these capitals; but for Greece the results were very nearly fatal. M. Venizelos had revealed by his gesture that he had already committed the inconceivable indiscretion of approaching Sir Edward Grey without the knowledge of the King or the Council of Ministers, and divulging to Sir Edward the contents of his memoranda even before he had submitted them to his sovereign!

The consequences of this action were soon felt in Greece.

1. The Entente diplomats considered from that time onwards that since a man of such political standing as M. Venizelos, to humour the fixed ideas of M. Delcassé and Sir Edward Grey, had suggested the amputation of his country in favour of the Bulgarians, there was no longer any need to take seriously the offers of intervention of the Gounaris Cabinet based on the guarantee of the territorial integrity of Greece.

2. The Entente diplomats, inspired by these suggestions of M. Venizelos, and taking advantage of them, conceived the sinister plan in July, 1915, of forcibly amputating Greece in favour of Bulgaria. And, as will be seen later on, Greece only escaped from this because the Bulgarians, disdaining the offer of the Entente, replied with a declaration of war!

M. Delcassé, at a secret meeting of the French Chamber on 16th June, 1916, took advantage of these memoranda of M. Venizelos to justify his policy of the dismemberment of Greece. He said ". . . M. Venizelos had recommended to the King some concessions to Bulgaria in a document which, far from feeling an embarrassment, he took pains himself to make public."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *Journal Officiel* of 24th October, 1919

## II

The Greek proposals of intervention are of considerable historical importance, but owing to the severity of the censorship of that period, the general public in Britain and France was almost entirely ignorant of them.

On 30th March/12th April, 1915, the Ministers of the three Entente Powers at Athens handed a communication to the Greek Government, demanding the military co-operation of Greece in the war.

That same day, in the discussion that followed, M. Gounaris asked the three Ministers for details regarding the interpretation that should be given to Sir Edward Grey's Note promising Greece "territorial acquisitions in the Aidin vilayet". Sir Francis Elliot, the British Minister, replied that it meant "the town of Smyrna with a portion of its hinterland". MM. Demidoff and Deville, the Russian and French Ministers, alleging that they were without instructions, would make no statement.<sup>1</sup>

Just at that time Prince George, brother of King Constantine, who was living in Paris (he was a son-in-law of Prince Roland Bonaparte), had come post-haste to Athens on the advice of M. Briand, then Keeper of the Seals, in order to set on foot negotiations for the entry of Greece into the war on the side of the Entente.

On 1st/14th April, 1915, M. Zographos, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, forwarded to the Triple Entente in the name of the Greek Government a formal offer of intervention. After drawing urgent attention in this document to the anxiety aroused in Greece by the equivocal and even hostile attitude of Bulgaria, he said :—

Greece would co-operate in the war against Turkey if the Powers would be willing to enter into a formal engagement to assure her the advantage of their complete solidarity with her, that is to say, if they would guarantee her *during the war* and for a certain period *after the war*, the integrity of her continental and insular territories, including Northern Epirus<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> At that time in the military occupation of Greece.

In consideration of this agreement Greece would accept the definite obligation to co-operate on the side of the Entente Powers as soon as they were ready to combine their forces with hers against Turkey, the definite aim of the war being the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The plan of the military operations would be settled by common consent between the military and naval general staffs, with the sole reservation, to be agreed to in advance, that if Bulgaria continued to remain neutral, the sphere of action of the Greek Army should not be situated outside Turkey in Europe.

The Act recording the terms of the agreement should specify also the territorial concessions to be made to Greece in Asia Minor, and also the facilities of a financial nature and for military replenishments that the Entente Powers would allow her in order to place her in a position effectively to fulfil the engagements entered into <sup>1</sup>

#### ZOGRAPHOS

This document is plainly dominated by the fear of Bulgarian aggression, which Athens already foresaw clearly. Greece had further ground for apprehension at this period, because in Petrograd, in Paris, and even in London the cession of Greek territory (! !) to Bulgaria, to induce the latter to join the Entente, was being openly discussed.

News of this Greek offer having leaked out, Herr von Mirbach, the German Minister at Athens, lost no time in demanding explanations from M. Zographos, on 3rd/16th April. The latter replied with perfect frankness that if the Entente sent sufficient forces to the East to crush Turkey, Greece could not remain indifferent and lose the opportunity of participating in the liquidation of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

On 6th/19th April M. Romanos, the Greek Minister in Paris, telegraphed to Athens that M. Delcassé had told him that the Greek note of 1st/14th April ran the risk of opening long discussions in which Bulgaria, already definitely ranged with the Triple Entente, would have precedence over Greece. And M. Poincaré, then President of the Republic, informed M. Romanos that the formula of territorial guarantee would need to be redrafted in such a manner *as not to give offence to Bulgaria*.

<sup>1</sup>. Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On 7th/20th April M. Gennadius, the Greek Minister in London, informed Athens that the reply of the Triple Entente would be none too favourable.

On 12th/25th April M. Romanos reported to his Government a long interview that he had had with M. Delcassé, on whom he had called to ask for a reply to the Greek Note of 1st/14th April. M. Delcassé began by saying that he had not yet had time to go into the question (!), and continued in the following words :—

Bulgaria is more and more envisaging a policy favourable to the Triple Entente. And how could anything else be expected? The Bulgarians have no interest whatever in allying themselves with the Turks . . .

You contend that Bulgaria is awaiting an opportunity to invade Serbia, and that there will be no preventing her from doing so if Greece marches against Turkey. *My information does not agree with yours*. Bulgaria will never commit such an absurdity, and will not risk her future. In spite of the German efforts at Sofia we believe that we are right in thinking that Bulgaria will not abandon her neutrality *unless in our favour*.

M. Romanos added :—

. . I laid before M. Delcassé all the documents that you have transmitted to me, in order to open his eyes to Bulgaria's duplicity. M. Delcassé remained inflexible. He added that Bulgaria would enter the war as soon as the Allied armies had advanced a little towards Constantinople . . According to M. Delcassé, the Triple Entente expect to capture Constantinople chiefly by means of the fleet. In their view the land operations are only a secondary matter. "Unlike us," he said to me, "you believe that the road to victory is by way of Thrace, but the fall of Constantinople will have so great a repercussion on Turkey, that after the event we shall be able to decide the fate of the Ottoman Empire without any military effort on land."

On 13th/26th April M. Zographos telegraphed to the Greek legations in Paris, London, and Petrograd that the British Minister in Athens had called on him to inform him that the British Government would view with great anxiety any action by Greece that might involve her in trouble with Bulgaria; that Britain desired an entente between the Balkan States; and that in the event of dissensions between

## 26 THE TRAGEDY OF GREECE

them those who caused the trouble would alienate from themselves the sympathies of Britain.

On 16th/29th April M. Romanos telegraphed that according to a communication received from the Director of Political Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay, Britain considered the Greek proposal of 1st/14th April as set aside for the time being. France and Russia agreed with this view, so that Greece must not expect to receive any reply to her offers. And M. Romanos, filled with the illusion of the future success of the Allied fleets in the Dardanelles, strongly urged Athens to elaborate new proposals.

M. Zographos replied to M. Romanos the same day :—

. . . You now consider that there is urgent need to put forward new proposals We should have no objection in principle, but in order to put them forward we should need to know the precise points of our original basis that must be abandoned, and we should also need to be sure that our new proposals would certainly be accepted

M. Gennadius telegraphed from London to Athens on the same date that Sir Edward Grey had complained to him of the hostile dispositions that he observed that Greece was making against Bulgaria. M. Gennadius gave a clear statement of facts which were universally familiar, but failed to convince Sir Edward of the hostile preparations of Bulgaria.

On 18th April/1st May M. Romanos reported to Athens that M. Delcassé had just declared to him that as Greece looked upon the Dardanelles operations in an entirely different light to the Allies, discussion appeared to be useless. M. Romanos informed M. Delcassé that Greece was ready to formulate new proposals provided that she was assured in advance that they would be well received ; M. Delcassé advised Greece to address herself to Sir Edward Grey.

M. Guillemin, French delegate on the Danube Commission, was passing through Athens at the time. He was received by the King, had a long discussion with MM. Gounaris and Zographos, and strongly urged the Greek Government to renew its proposal of 1st/14th April, omitting this time the condition regarding territorial guarantee against Bulgaria for a period after the war.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of M. Zographos of 17th/30th April, in the Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Under this pressure from M. Guillemin, who was supposed to be in the confidence of M. Delcassé, the Greek Government made a second offer of intervention to the Entente Powers. But remembering that its proposals of 1st/14th April had never been replied to officially, it gave this new initiative a semi-official form. On 18th April/1st May the Gounaris Ministry telegraphed to the Greek Ministers in London, Paris, and Petrograd to submit to the Governments to which they were accredited the following basis in order to ascertain whether it would have any chance of being accepted.

As it appears that the Powers are not able to furnish this guarantee for a future period (against Bulgaria), Greece cannot abandon her neutrality unless she can secure herself from her own resources against future dangers. It is, therefore, her imperative duty to keep her land forces intact so long as Bulgaria remains inactive. In order, however, to give the Entente irrefutable proof of her good will, Greece could take part in the struggle at once with her naval forces, placing her ports and her territory at the disposal of the Allies if required. I may add in confidence that M. Guillemin, a former colleague of M. Delcassé, when passing through Athens on his way from Paris, speaking, it is true, in a personal capacity, gave me indications which permit the hope that the above proposal might be accepted, and that in any case it would have the advantage of dissipating certain misconceptions as to the dispositions of Greece in face of France and her Allies.

ZOGRAPHOS.

On 19th April/2nd May M. Theotokis, the Greek Minister in Berlin, telegraphed to Athens that in the view of the German Government the Gounaris Ministry, judging from its negotiations with the Entente, was even more hostile to Germany than was that of M. Venizelos.

On 21st April/4th May Prince George telegraphed from Paris that M. Briand had informed him that the offer of the co-operation of the Greek fleet alone, in an expedition in which the Allies were chiefly in need of soldiers, ran the risk of being interpreted as a partial withdrawal from the proposal of 1st/14th April, and of being refused in consequence.

On 22nd April/6th May M. Theotokis announced from Berlin that Herr von Jagow had informed him that *a very*

*solid bond had just been created between Bulgaria and Turkey, of which every Greek Government would have to take account before rushing into an adventure that might cost it the whole of Macedonia.* This was the announcement of the second Treaty of Alliance between Turkey and Bulgaria—the first was dated 6th August, 1914. The Governments of Paris, London, and Petrograd obstinately refused to believe in the existence of these treaties.

On 22nd April/5th May M. Delcassé told M. Romanos that London and Petrograd agreed to the following formula :—

Greece offers to the Allied Powers to abandon neutrality by placing her fleet at their disposal, with the use of her ports and territory, but reserving her army to hold Bulgaria in check, if the need should arise

M. Delcassé added that such a proposal would be accepted at once, but that Greece must formulate *no condition*. If Greece joined in at once, the vilayet of Aidin would still be reserved for her

On the same date the Gounaris Cabinet, while accepting this formula in principle, requested M. Romanos to see M. Delcassé at once, and ask him to give his personal views on certain points.

The Athens Government was at this time in a really tragic situation. While Berlin was informing it that Bulgaria was concluding an alliance with Turkey, Paris and London were persistently asseverating that the entry of Roumania and Bulgaria into the war on the side of the Entente was imminent.

On 24th April/7th May Prince George and M. Romanos both telegraphed to Athens that they had just had a long interview with M. Delcassé, in the course of which the head of the Quai d'Orsay had shown great nervousness, and even anger. He told them that Britain and Russia would never accept the co-operation of Greece “subject to conditions”. After a long discussion, M. Delcassé thought he had found a workable formula. This was as follows :—

The Royal Greek Government, having noted with satisfaction the assurances contained in the Note transmitted to it in the name of their respective Governments by the representatives of the Triple

Entente at Athens, is ready from now onwards to co-operate in the war against Turkey, and to offer its fleet and naval bases. It reserves its army for the present for the defence of its territory in the event of attack from Bulgaria, so long as that State fails to declare in favour of the Triple Entente. Greece thus *hopes to have* the advantage of complete solidarity with the Allies, which implies the guarantee of the integrity of her territory. She enters the alliance in complete loyalty, entrusting the safeguarding of her vital interests entirely to the three Powers of the Triple Entente, her protectors since her emancipation.

It will be noted that M. Delcassé used the expression "hopes to have" in regard to the territorial integrity of Greece; he avoided any categorical affirmation.

Prince George added in his telegram that Britain had become very sensitive, and would not tolerate anything that savoured of distrust of her. At the same time, M. Briand said to the Prince that Greece would lose a unique opportunity for all time if she did not give confidence free rein, and immediately renounce her "conditions". M. Romanos, in his telegram, ended by begging the Greek Government to enter the war at once, pointing out that it was a matter of S. Sophia and the salvation of Hellenism!

What was the Athens Government to do? Aware of what was brewing in Bulgaria, it was justified in fearing more than ever that the Entente, despairing of success, might make an offer to the Bulgarians to despoil Greece in their favour. The outbursts of anger with which the Entente refused to guarantee the territorial integrity of Greece were the best possible evidence of some such intention. What Athens feared above all was the subtlety and artifice of such formulas as the latest one from M. Delcassé. The Gounaris Government, anxious to furnish incontestable proof of its sincerity and its desire to enter the war at once on the side of the Entente, advised King Constantine to make an urgent, personal appeal in this sense to M. Poincaré, President of the Republic. King Constantine forthwith sent the following telegram to Paris.—

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
ATHENS, 9th May, 1915

No. 1403 *Conf*  
Greek Legation,  
Paris.

*Strictly Confidential*

Be good enough to transmit as urgent to H.R H Prince George the following telegram from H M the King

What stands in the way of My Government in the matter of our co-operation against Turkey is the refusal of the Powers to guarantee our territorial integrity up to and including the Treaty of Peace. Without this assurance it is impossible for us blindly to engage in war with the fear of endangering the integrity of our territory. As there seem to be difficulties in the way of diplomatic representation in this sense, I request you to see M Poincaré and to inform him in My name of the situation of My Government. As he declared to you in your conversation of 20th April that "a territorial guarantee would certainly be given us for the period of the war and during the peace negotiations", he will perhaps consider it reasonable to arrange for his Government and the Governments of France's Allies to give us the assurances that we feel are indispensable. Stop. The essential thing is that the Entente Powers shall give us the solemn promise that they will have respect and enforce respect for our teiritorial integrity up to the time of the re-establishment of peace, and that they will not permit any infringement of it whatsoever to be made in the future treaty of peace. Stop. You will point out that Greece has justification for surprise at the fact that the friendly Powers, while ready to receive her as an ally, refuse to come to a clear understanding with her although, from what we can gather, they have not thought it necessary to take the same line with other countries.

CONSTANTINE

This telegram, sent from Athens on the evening of 9th May reached Paris on the morning of 10th May. It was immediately forwarded to Prince George, who visited M. Poincaré the same day. On the evening of the same day, 10th May, Prince George took a long telegram to the Greek legation in Paris for transmission to the King, containing an account of his interview with M. Poincaré. We extract from it the paragraph relating to the special task with which he had been charged :—

. . . M Poincaré's reply was that the Powers of the Triple Entente could not guarantee by a solemn declaration the *territorial integrity* of Greece, because, apart from the fact that such a declaration would be unusual, it would bar the eventual co-operation of Bulgaria with the Triple Entente. And it would even be dangerous for Greece, for the Entente was convinced that it might lead the Bulgarians to attack her from the very fear lest, as a result of this guarantee, they should lose Cavala (*sic*) for ever.

The President of the Republic said to me that, according to his information, he would not be surprised to see Bulgaria come into line in two or three days' time.

The Prince ended his telegram by saying that M. Poincaré, after reminding him that the Triple Entente intended to give Greece, if she came into the war, Smyrna and its hinterland, complained of the Greek Government's want of confidence in the Powers, a want of confidence that was estranging them more and more.

On the day following that on which he sent his telegram for M. Poincaré, King Constantine fell seriously ill, and for weeks he ceased to take any part in the affairs of the State.

On 30th April/13th May the Athens Government telegraphed to M. Romanos :—

The Royal Government has carefully considered the formula which M. Delcassé suggested to Prince George in connexion with our offer to co-operate with the Entente Powers against Turkey with our naval forces only. I have with regret to inform you that this formula leaves doubts as to eventualities which, during the war or during the peace negotiations, might compromise the integrity of our territory. These doubts are all the more justifiable because the Powers, in spite of our insistence, hesitate to dispel them. As the integrity of our national territory, so dearly acquired, is at stake, we cannot remain in uncertainty, nor can we allow the slightest ambiguity to subsist. As you owe M. Delcassé a personal reply, you may give it in the spirit of the foregoing, and you may express to him your keen regret that the Powers have not felt it possible to form an entente with us with a view to a collaboration which we should have been happy to offer them and which they appeared to desire. You may add that the Government will persist none the less in the policy which it has followed from the outset, of the most benevolent neutrality towards the Entente Powers.

At this moment the diplomatic *chantage* in favour of Bulgaria reached its culminating point ; the representatives of Greece with the Entente were cleverly worked on. On 8th/21st May Prince George, in Paris, and M. Dragoumis, in Petrograd, were informed *confidentially* that Bulgaria was on the point of entering the war against Turkey at the expense and to the detriment of Greece.

On 15th/28th May M. Romanos, apparently the victim of his own credulity, telegraphed to Athens that an intimate friend of the Quai d'Orsay had informed him that the agreement between Bulgaria and the Entente was on the point of being *concluded*, and that Bulgaria's military intervention was *imminent*. On the same day, in the evening, he notified Athens that he had just seen M. Delcassé. The latter had told him that if the Entente had not been obliged to wait for so many weeks for the decision of Greece (*sic*), any promise to Bulgaria would have been impossible. For the rest, added M. Delcassé naïvely, "I have informed you on several occasions of the gradual evolution of Bulgaria towards the Triple Entente"! In closing, M. Delcassé, after telling M. Romanos that he *exaggerated the Bulgarian peril*, assured him that "the future of Greece would be amply safeguarded by a 'dressing' of the *wound of Cavalla*, a 'dressing' in conformity with the views expressed by M. Venizelos in his memoranda to the King."

This last allusion shows the dangers to which Greece was exposed in consequence of M. Venizelos's ill-advised revelation.

The Greek Minister at Nish reported on 20th May/2nd June that the Entente had just asked Serbia to cede Serbian Macedonia to the Bulgarians, in return for compensation after victory, if Bulgaria immediately entered the war against Turkey.

The Serbian Prime Minister, deeply wounded at this declaration, replied immediately that it was impossible for Serbia to cede her own territory, that this attempt was the triumph of the policy of extortion, and that he was astonished at such an attempt, which was more like the act of an enemy than an ally. .

At the time no more than a few vague and indefinite allusions to the facts which we have exposed succeeded in

passing the meshes of the censorship. Thus public opinion has never been in a position to grasp their portent. Later on during the war, the ban on any mention of them was still more strict, for any allusion to these facts would have destroyed the legend which it was the mission of the semi-official Press to spread ; a legend which represented King Constantine and M. Gounaris as proved pro-Germans, entirely in the service of the Emperor William.

Here, for instance, is one of the allusions made by the French Press at this time to the Greco-Entente negotiations. It is from the Paris *Temps*.<sup>1</sup> The *Temps* praised the "genius and daring of M. Venizelos who was ready to abandon Cavalla for the Smyrna region". And it quoted M. Gounaris :—

who persisted in mixing up with this offer of alliance the condition of a guarantee of the territorial integrity of the Kingdom M Venizelos had abstained from demanding this undertaking from the Powers.

He relied on their loyal and traditional friendship, and did not wish, by any inopportune stipulation, to interfere with the chances of success of the vast plan which he had submitted to the King. The Gounaris Cabinet had no success with the Powers

As a matter of fact, in 1917, M. Venizelos did entrust himself to the "loyal and traditional friendship" of the Powers, by entering the war *unconditionally*. He was but poorly recompensed for doing so, and he prepared a disaster for his country. From 1919 onwards, even before the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, the Quai d'Orsay became pro-Turk and thwarted Greek action at Smyrna.

From what has been said, it is clear that

1. King Constantine had to reject the Dardanelles projects of M. Venizelos not on account of pro-Germanism, but from a fully justified fear of a Bulgarian attack ; and

2. The successors of M. Venizelos did everything in their power to give effect to his policy, except that the Gounaris Cabinet required guarantees from the Entente against the Bulgarian *coup* which they already foresaw. The amazing blindness of M. Venizelos in regard to this *coup* gained for him unbounded credit with the Entente, and for the Entente

<sup>1</sup> *Temps*, 1st June, 1915

the disasters of Serbia, of Roumania, and of the Dardanelles, and, later on, the tragic quarrels with Greece.

The official documents quoted in detail relating to these negotiations will suffice to destroy once for all a pernicious falsehood of that period. The three protagonists of these negotiations, King Constantine, M. Gounaris, and M. Zographos, are no longer amongst us. It is doing but justice to their memory to acknowledge the perfect frankness and absolute loyalty that guided them throughout the negotiations. It is impossible to-day to look back without emotion on the pitiless display of passion against this King and this Minister, whose sole fault was the foresight in regard to the Bulgarian *coup* which brought them into conflict with the preconceived ideas of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay.

It may definitely be affirmed that the Entente committed at that period its gravest diplomatic mistake in the war. For out of this mistake there came the tragic downfall of Russia.

### III

After its rejection of the Greek offers of intervention, Entente diplomacy showed astonishing sourness towards the Hellenic nation. During the summer of 1915 Greek merchant vessels were subjected to indescribably vexatious treatment by the Allied ships of war. The Allies exercised their right of search with courtesy in the case of neutral ships as a rule, but they treated Greek vessels, even coasters, with brutality ; they detained them far longer than was necessary, and going beyond the limits imposed by international law they carried their investigations to the length of inquiring whether the sentiments of the crews were Venizelist or anti-Venizelist !

Greece was receiving military equipment from America. The British fleet intercepted this, and the British Government compelled Greece to sell it to them ! So that, when in October, 1915, the Entente demanded of Greece that she should enter the war at a day's notice, the Greek army found itself almost entirely without supplies, and the Entente was unable, for more than a year, to furnish any.

On the other hand, the Anglo-French fleet allowed Germany to send by sea to the Bulgarians just as much war material

as she pleased, letting it pass and be landed at Dedeagatch with disconcerting complaisance !

## IV

After the failure of all its efforts with the Entente the neutrality of Greece appeared to be definitely established for the time being, and the Gounaris Cabinet hastened to conform with constitutional requirements. The Chamber was dissolved and the Government proceeded to hold a General Election on 13th June. The result was a defeat for the Government ; the Venizelist party gained a majority.

Interested foreign propaganda spread entirely erroneous interpretations both of the electoral campaign and of the popular verdict. It is untrue that at this period Greek public opinion saw in the Venizelists the advocates of intervention. During the electoral campaign M. Venizelos did not make a single speech. He remained in the country, pretending that he had withdrawn from public life. As to his lieutenants, they took care to formulate no programme, much less to mention war. In the country districts they endeavoured to spread the belief that a secret understanding had been arrived at between the King and M. Venizelos, with the object of getting the better of the foreign diplomats.

On 13th June no particular political question was before the country, and the electors voted according to their personal sympathies. M. Venizelos, who had been in power for four years, had a much larger following in the constituencies than M. Gounaris, who had but recently come into prominence. He therefore gained the day, though with a greatly reduced majority.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances it is impossible to draw any conclusion from this election as to the views of the Greek nation on matters of foreign policy.

## V

More than a year later, in 1916 and 1917, when the semi-official Entente Press, particularly that of France, began the violent campaign against King Constantine of which more will be said later, certain papers thought fit to accuse him, in violent terms, of unconstitutional action in authorizing

<sup>1</sup> In the dissolved Parliament 75 per cent of the Deputies were Venizelists ; in the Chamber elected on 13th June scarcely 60 per cent were Venizelists.

the elections of 18th June. We shall have no difficulty in demonstrating the absurdity of this accusation.

According to Article 31 of the Greek Constitution "the King appoints and dismisses his Ministers". However, in the present case King Constantine did not dismiss M. Venizelos ; M. Venizelos himself resigned in March, because he could not obtain the assent of the Crown to the entry of Greece into the war.

But the King, in refusing to approve of the warlike policy that M. Venizelos wished to inaugurate, acted in strict conformity with Article 32 of the Constitution, which attributes to the sovereign alone *the right to declare war or to conclude peace*.

Following the usual custom, the King called the Opposition to power, granting them at the same time the dissolution of the Chamber (in conformity with the powers which Article 37 of the Constitution confers on him), in order that the country might give its verdict on the ministerial crisis which had arisen. This was the most liberal interpretation of the spirit of the Constitution. But this was not all. There were other important reasons for taking this course : 1. The dissolved Chamber had just reached the end of its four years' mandate ; it was too old accurately to reflect the feeling in the constituencies ; and 2, The Chamber was elected before the Balkan wars, so that only pre-war Greece was represented in it ; the new provinces, about 40 per cent of the country, were entirely unrepresented. This last fact alone was sufficient to justify the King's action, making new elections imperative.

The constitutionality of King Constantine's action is thus beyond the possibility of question.

## VI

During the whole of the summer of 1915 King Constantine had incessantly been warning the Allied Ministers at Athens that the Bulgarians had concluded an alliance with Germany, and that sooner or later they would make a sudden attack on the Entente. King Constantine, who had this news from Berlin, felt that it was in the interest of Greece that he should not keep the secret to himself. Unhappily his warnings were received with disdain in London and Paris. They were

regarded as a German manœuvre to . . . bluff the Entente ! It was not until September, when the Bulgars attacked Serbia, that London and Paris realized the inestimable value of the warnings which King Constantine had given and recognized his sincerity towards the Entente. But it was too late, the game had been lost in the Balkans. Under this cruel blow, however, the inspired Press of Paris felt bound to render homage to King Constantine's clear-sightedness.

Thus we read in the *Temps*<sup>1</sup> :—

King Constantine knows the Bulgarians and their sovereign. He had felt it to be his duty to warn M. Guillemin, when our new Minister at Athens had his first interview with him, that the Bulgarians, for whose benefit we were demanding territorial sacrifices from Greece in the name of the chimerical Balkan union, were making fools of us, and had formed an alliance with our enemies whilst negotiating with us

And Mr. Crawfurd Price wrote in the *Sunday Times* of 22nd February, 1922 :—

. We also know that during the summer of 1915 King Constantine himself warned one of the Ministers of the Entente (and consequently all) that the German-Bulgar pact was a *fait accompli*, and the King's secretary, Major Melas, told our Minister at Athens the number of Bulgarian wagons that had, on various dates, transported German ammunition to the Dardanelles.<sup>2</sup>

## VII

On 3rd August, 1915, the diplomats of the Quadruple Entente, blinded by their incredible faith in Bulgaria, presented a veritable ultimatum to Athens, calling on Greece, a neutral country and a loyal friend, to cede Eastern Macedonia—her richest province—to Bulgaria ! To save appearances, and, at the same time, to encourage Greece to sacrifice herself with a good grace, the ultimatum promised her, after victory, certain compensations, more or less extensive, in the region of Smyrna. In other words, Greece was promised the skin of a bear that had yet to be killed. For at that time the Turks were victorious in the Dardanelles,

<sup>1</sup> 5th October, 1915

<sup>2</sup> Retranslated.

the Russians irretrievably defeated in Poland, and the confidence in victory severely shaken, even in the Cabinets of London and Paris. All this was well known at Athens. The ultimatum therefore appeared not merely unjust, but ridiculous. Greece rejected it as one man. For the rest, the elementary morality and respect for contracts which are the foundation of national and international order made it impossible for Greece even to discuss this odious bartering away of her own sons.

On 5th August Sir Edward Grey informed the Greek Government, through the British Minister in Athens, that as soon as the Government of Sofia accepted the offer of the Entente, Britain would put into concrete terms the cession to be made by Greece to Bulgaria of Cavalla and its hinterland! Rarely in history has so cynical a communication been recorded of a great civilized nation.

M. Gounaris replied, as was only reasonable, with a categorical refusal and a hot protest. His refusal, however, provoked hardly disguised wrath in London and Paris. Very soon the Entente diplomats let it be known that, after all, the opinion of Greece on the matter was of small consequence to them. If Greece refused voluntarily to dismember herself, they would dismember her by force! And the Entente Press vigorously supported this remarkable negation of justice.

This ultimatum produced just indignation throughout Greece. And public opinion lost itself in conjecture, incapable of comprehending how the Powers that were carrying on the war with slogans of *Right, Justice, Equity, Enfranchisement of races, Liberation of peoples, Protection of the small and weak*, etc., could dream of committing such a transgression. All these fine phrases, Athens asked, are they merely empty words? Athens was forced to the conclusion that the world had not changed; that it was what it always had been; that the powerful in this world mocked at justice when their personal interests were at stake. And, indeed, have not post-war events proved this? Is not the Treaty of Lausanne confirmation of it?

The disillusionment in Greece was all the greater because this outrage was committed by the very States who called

themselves her only friends, even, indeed, her protectors, and to whom Greece had rendered invaluable service, at the expense of her neutrality.

It was then that German propaganda set foot for the first time in Greece. Entente diplomacy had provided it with an unlooked-for opportunity. This is a truth which it is difficult to deny, but which the semi-official papers, aided by the censorship, consistently suppressed throughout the war in Britain and France.

Concerning the events of this period one may also cite the Memoirs of Lord Grey, who was at this time Foreign Secretary.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the Greek offers in April, 1915, concerning land operations against Constantinople, Lord Grey writes that their non-acceptance was dictated by the fear of Russia. Russia was already very ill-disposed towards the Allies, on account of the enormous effort that she had to make on her own front, and would have been likely to detach herself from the alliance if she had seen Constantine enter Constantinople at the head of Greek troops.<sup>2</sup> It must, however, be pointed out that this account leaves unexplained the efforts made at the time by Allied diplomacy to persuade Greece to enter the war. Lord Grey admits the impropriety of the demand that Greece, a neutral and friendly country, should cede territory to the Bulgarians; but his account comes to an end before the sending to Athens of the Allied Note of 3rd August, 1915.

## VIII

This brings us to the subject of foreign propaganda in Greece, and in the first place the German propaganda. The subject is worthy of attention, for, during the war, the Entente Press set itself the task of representing this propaganda as a formidable organization, carried on with diabolical cunning, disposing of immense funds, and enjoying unlimited complaisance in Greece. If one were to believe these papers, all the troubles of the Entente in the East were due to this

<sup>1</sup> *Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916*, by Viscount Grey of Fallodon. Published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Grey, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 179-80.

propaganda. These statements, which were widely accepted by public opinion, were pure fancy. Their sole purpose was to hide embarrassing truths from the public opinion of France and her Allies.

The German propaganda in Greece was directed by a commercial traveller, Baron von Schenk, a person of limited capacity but plenty of assurance. He won the reputation all over Europe of being a formidable propagandist.

He did not owe this reputation to his talents, however, and still less to the funds at his disposal. He owed it entirely to the exaggerations of the Allies, who frantically advertised him all over the world. It may be affirmed without fear of contradiction that Anglo-French propaganda spent in Greece at least fifteen times as much as the German. Baron von Schenk succeeded in influencing certain papers at first, but the Entente propaganda that immediately followed him bought up all that remained to be sold, started a host of new papers, and, distributing gold in abundance throughout Greece, quickly put the Baron out of action. Yet in spite of these enormous pecuniary sacrifices, supported even by armed force, the Entente did not succeed in recapturing Greek sympathies. And this for a very simple reason, and one which never had anything to do with "German gold". Entente propaganda only preached war to the Greeks, war with all its perils, its terrors and its hazards ; and this during the years in which the Entente was sustaining nothing but defeats, and in which its ultimate victory still appeared very doubtful.

The Radio Agency spread daily in Greece grotesquely exaggerated reports on the military situation, covering French propaganda with ridicule. The Greeks shrugged their shoulders in face of such literature. Greek opinion was unable to understand why the Allies, if they were as sure of victory as they said, were so intent on dragging little Greece at all costs into a struggle of giants, in which her modest force would count for nothing, or next to nothing, in the balance. If the French leaders were so bent on dragging her into the world conflict it could only be because they were in despair. That was the Greek argument. Demidov, Russian Minister in Athens, telegraphed to Petrograd on

20th May concerning the British and French propaganda in Greece<sup>1</sup> :—

They are spending unimaginable sums. They are buying up papers, they are subsidizing special editions, they have even gone so far as to found a French telegraphic agency, the Radio Agency, which is trying by means of wildly imaginative news to influence opinion in favour of the Entente.

Finally, it should be noted that the French agents in Greece committed a grave psychological error. We say the French because they had the direction of Allied policy and propaganda in Greece from October, 1915, onwards. French agents, in agreement with M. Venizelos, resorted to violence and to a whole series of abuses, of which we shall have more to say in the following chapters, in the hope of turning Greek opinion against the King, whose neutrality was anathema to them, and so being able to bring the interventionist Venizelos back to power. But these tactics completely failed; the Greek nation saw through the manœuvre at once; it only felt the greater esteem for its anti-war King and the greater aversion for M. Venizelos, in whom it discerned the instigator of the humiliations that foreigners were inflicting upon the country. This ill-treatment of a whole nation, already embittered by the ultimatum of 3rd August, these outrageous encroachments on the honour and sovereignty of Greece, strengthened her determination to remain neutral.

When Baron von Schenk realized the state of mind created in Greece by the mistakes of the Entente, his one idea was to make capital out of it. He accordingly had the news trumpeted through the German Press that, thanks to his efforts, Greek opinion had become frankly hostile to the Entente, that the neutrality of Greece was his own work, and that by her neutrality Greece was rendering precious services to the German cause! The French representatives in charge of propaganda in Greece, dreading lest their mistakes

<sup>1</sup> The following is the exact title of the Russian White Book, from which we shall make frequent quotations. *Europecheskaya derjavy i Gretsua v epokhу mirovoy voyny* (*The European Powers and Greece during the Great War*, from the secret documents of the late Ministry of Foreign Affairs, preface by A Adamov. Moscow, 1922, 8°, 239 pages).

## 42 THE TRAGEDY OF GREECE

should become publicly known in France, taxed their ingenuity to mask them, imputing their difficulties to the sole fact of the extent of the German propaganda. A prolonged and malignant campaign was at once organized in the Paris papers, and French opinion was quickly led astray, to the great comfort of the culprits. The latter went on quoting the Baron's rhodomontades in proof of their statements. Thus a vicious circle was established.

One may judge of the absurdity of the opinions regarding Baron von Schenk spread at the time in London and Paris, from the telegram sent to Berlin on 3rd September, 1915, by the German Legation at Athens, in which the actions of the Baron were sharply criticized and he was declared to be showing "chronic and increasing symptoms of mental aberration"!

This foreign propaganda, which had for a long time been a scourge for unfortunate Greece, was not without its comic side. Thus, Baron von Schenk had regular meetings with his colleague the chief of the French secret police in Greece, and the two adventurers communicated to one another, as good comrades, the names of the clients who were swindling them!

But the Baron was almost always short of money; he even endeavoured on several occasions to organize collections for his benefit among those Greeks whom the Entente propagandists had misused. He was incessantly complaining of the enormous demands of certain Greek journalists.

The tales of foreign propaganda in Greece would fill a volume. Here is one that is not without piquancy. In 1916 the Allied propagandists wanted to buy the journal *Embros*. When the directors of the *Patris*, the official organ of M. Venizelos, heard of the negotiations, they presented themselves immediately at the French legation and threatened to change camps that same night if this money was not paid to the *Patris* instead of the *Embros*. And it was the articles of the *Patris* that the Allied papers seized on during the war as authoritative evidence of the only true state of opinion in Greece! During this sad period of hatred let loose, those persons were held up to general esteem whose consciences were bought. On 28th April, 1916,

the French legation at Athens telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay, under the signature of Henry Turot<sup>1</sup> :—

. . . The Venizelist papers are very disturbed at the acquisition of other papers ; they will need to be pacified with 200,000 or 300,000 francs

And in a personal report to the Quai d'Orsay, dated 30th April, 1916, M. Henry Turot stated :—

. . . The *Embros* business has been checked by the threats of the Venizelist journals, which are enterprises of extortion, they have threatened to attack the Entente if it buys the *Embros*

M. Henry Turot was an ex-deputy who was sent to Athens on a confidential mission and was for several months in charge of the occult direction of French policy in Greece. He corresponded with the Minister Marcel Sembat in Paris. So long as Turot's intrigues in Athens provoked no inter-Allied complications, Sembat telegraphed the agreed word of approval to him : " Reste."

## IX

It is particularly interesting to observe that in August, 1915, under pressure from the Entente, the Skupshtina consented to vast cessions of Serbian territory in Macedonia to the Bulgarians. On this occasion M. Pashitch expressed to the Greek Minister at Nish his deep indignation against the Entente. But Serbia's tragic situation made submission a cruel necessity. The spirit, however, of the Greco-Serb treaty of alliance, and the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), were incompatible with any cession of Serbian territory to Bulgaria except with the previous consent of Greece. M. Politis, therefore, who was at the time permanent secretary of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, immediately pointed out that the vote of the Skupshtina rendered void the Greco-Serb treaty of alliance, and on his initiative fresh pourparlers were set on foot with the Government at Nish, with a view to the elaboration of a new treaty. Under M. Venizelos, who shortly afterwards came into power, the revision of the treaty was pursued until the entry of Bulgaria into the war. Yet, a year later, when M. Politis thought

<sup>1</sup> Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

fit to become the chief advocate of the Venizelist rebellion, he entirely forgot his past, and, at Salonica, insisted vigorously on the observation of the treaty that he himself had proclaimed void.

## X

On 17th August the Chamber elected in June proceeded to the election of its president. The Venizelist candidate defeated the Government candidate. M. Gounaris handed in to the King the resignation of the Cabinet. M. Venizelos was immediately called to power by the King, and formed his Government on the following day.

M. Gounaris was a very able lawyer and a perfectly honest man—he died poor—but he lacked two qualities essential to a statesman: firmness in internal administration and diplomatic adroitness in foreign relations. In 1915 he was able to extricate himself with honour from the difficulties that beset him, but on his return to power in 1921 the European diplomatic situation was more than he could cope with. He thought he was doing right in continuing the Asiatic blunder of M. Venizelos, because Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Curzon so counselled him. His optimistic temperament prevented him from perceiving the dangers of a continuation of the Smyrna adventure. Thus it was he who reaped the bitter fruits of the policy of M. Venizelos. He was arraigned by his Venizelist opponents. The trial was a caricature of justice, and his execution a base act of party vengeance.

## CHAPTER IV

### VENIZELOS MINISTRY

(*August–October, 1915*)

Venizelos Ministry—King Constantine's predictions prove correct : Bulgaria mobilizes.—M Venizelos wants to enter the war at once, without considering the lack of munitions and army stores.—Greece mobilizes as a precaution —In flagrant violation of the Constitution and of international law, and without the King's knowledge, M Venizelos secretly invites the Allies to Salonica and tries to precipitate his country into the war —The King makes use of his constitutional prerogatives against M Venizelos —French views on the Salonica expedition —Initial errors —Declarations of M Delcassé in the secret sitting of the Chamber on 16th June, 1916.

#### I

On his accession to power—at the end of August, 1915—M. Venizelos found himself in general agreement with the King in carrying out a policy of watchful neutrality. There was no longer any question of the Dardanelles expedition : M. Venizelos admitted to the Chamber that his electoral victory gave no mandate for it.<sup>1</sup>

But M. Venizelos was in a delicate situation. In the eyes of the Entente the ultimatum of 3rd August remained in spite of its rejection by M. Gounaris. If he had accepted it M. Venizelos would have found the whole nation against him ; if he had rejected it he would irretrievably have lost the friendship of the Entente ; the Parisian Press would at once have treated him as a pro-German ! Caught between the anvil and the hammer, M. Venizelos adroitly wriggled and temporized.

<sup>1</sup> See M. Venizelos' speech in the Chamber, 5th October, 1915.

## II

On 15th September, 1915, the Entente diplomats, with their strangely misguided pro-Bulgarianism, replied to M. Rodoslavov's demands by giving unlimited satisfaction to the aspirations of the Bulgarians in respect of Macedonia. The Bulgarian Government, which declared that it had entered into no engagement whatever with the Central Powers, knew that these offers implied Bulgaria's entry into the field against Turkey. This in no way deterred them from carrying on simultaneous negotiations with the Porte for the cession of the enclave of Demotica. The conclusion of these pourparlers was alternately affirmed and denied.

M. Rodoslavov, moreover, whenever the conversations with the Allies languished, found means to revive them by official or semi-official reminders. By playing this double game it was hoped in Sofia to stimulate Turkish concessions. Not until the agreement with Turkey was definitely settled did the Bulgarian Prime Minister throw off the mask. He announced at one and the same time the conditions of the Treaty with the Ottoman Empire and the approaching Austro-German offensive against Serbia, "which would enable Bulgaria to occupy the coveted Macedonian territories"!

However, the Allied offer of these Macedonian territories to Bulgaria, unspeakable outrage as it was against Greece and Serbia, remained, fortunately for the latter, without reply, or rather the only reply was the Bulgarian mobilization of 21st September. On 28th September Sir Edward Grey went so far as to send to Bulgaria a timid warning, concluding with an expression of the conviction that Bulgaria would never become the instrument of the enemies of the Entente! Not until 4th October, after many consultations and hesitations, did Russia finally send an ultimatum to Bulgaria, in the name of the Entente, giving her 24 hours to come out into the open. The Bulgarians vehemently protested their good faith until 11th October, the day on which they attacked the Serbian frontier to the north-east of Nish. On the 12th they declared war on Serbia. It was not until 15th October that the Entente Powers at last resigned themselves, one after another, in face of the *fait accompli*, to declare war on Bulgaria.

## III

Since his return to power in August M. Venizelos had incessantly urged the King to declare war on Bulgaria. Why? To what end? No one ever knew. In vain did the King show him the extreme danger of such action, since the Entente, blinded by their pro-Bulgarianism, would look upon it as a defiance, and very probably reply with a declaration of war on Greece, in order the better to despoil her in favour of Bulgaria; M. Venizelos replied with strange sophisms! Then the news came of the Bulgarian mobilization of 21st September. King Constantine at once insisted on the necessity, as a *measure of precaution*, of an immediate mobilization against Bulgaria.

If King Constantine had been in secret agreement with the Emperor William, as his detractors pretended a little later, would he have resorted to general mobilization as a protection against Bulgaria? Would he have been so insistent for months before in warning the Entente of what was brewing against them in Sofia?

At the moment of the mobilization M. Venizelos considered that an excellent opportunity was offered to Greece for attacking Bulgaria as the ally of the Entente. And he earnestly begged the King to call the Allies to Salonica and to enter the campaign at once. In reply King Constantine pointed out very wisely that to gain the victory in a war it was necessary in the first place to have an army to rely on, and that it was therefore necessary minutely to study the military aspect of the question. With the support of the general staff, the King proved to M. Venizelos that the equipment and stores of the Greek army no longer fulfilled the requirements of modern warfare. Greece had carried through the Balkan war with less than 200 pieces of light or medium artillery; these pieces were for the most part worn out. Between the two wars Greece had with difficulty been able to obtain a few pieces of American artillery. Since the commencement of the great war, all the munitions that she had attempted to purchase from America had been seized on the high seas, as has already been mentioned, and forcibly bought by the Allies, in clear violation of international law.

Not having any munition factories, and her industries being only rudimentary, Greece was in a lamentable state of disarmament ; she was entirely without the proper material for trench warfare, and she had not a single piece of heavy artillery ! So also with rifles the stock of Manlichers,<sup>1</sup> apart from their bad condition, was scarcely sufficient to arm 100,000 men. Finally, through the fault of the Allies, the small stock of shells of the Greek army was, as has already been observed, almost entirely useless.

It may therefore be affirmed that the matériel of which the Greek army disposed at this period would have been exhausted in the preliminary skirmishes, before ever going into battle ! To enter the war at a day's notice with an army so insufficiently and defectively equipped would have been suicidal.

In the opinion of King Constantine the problem finally resolved itself into knowing what would be the minimum time that the Entente would require for the preparation of a Balkan campaign, which would entail (1) completely equipping the Greek army with every kind of matériel ; and (2) landing at Salonica 150,000 troops as substitutes for an equal number of Serbian troops (as provided by the Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance in case of war against Bulgaria) which the Serbians could not furnish under the circumstances, as they were attacked from another quarter in the North.<sup>2</sup>

The King doubted very much whether the Allies were in a position to carry out this double task promptly, and if they could not they would entirely lose the advantage of the element of surprise and would expose Greece to an appalling disaster. In this Constantine showed good judgment ; the material difficulties of the Entente enterprise were enormous, as was shown by the sequel : the Allies took two months to transport the first 60,000 troops to Salonica and eight months to reach the figure of 150,000 !

For these reasons the King and the general staff considered that Greece should temporize until she was certain as to the effort that the Entente was willing or able to accomplish in

<sup>1</sup> The Manlicher rifle of the Greek army was of Austrian manufacture

<sup>2</sup> Military Convention between the Kingdom of Greece and the Kingdom of Serbia, appended to the Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance of 1913, art. 2.

the Balkans. The tragic example of the Dardanelles was a warning.

To all these arguments M. Venizelos replied in substance as follows : "The Entente is mistress of the seas, and in a position to send us a large army at once. As to matériel, I am convinced that the Entente has more than it needs and can at once provide abundantly for the Greek army.<sup>1</sup> I propose, therefore, to request the Entente immediately to send 150,000 troops to Salonica, to fulfil the obligation towards Greece laid on Serbia by the military convention appended to the Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance."

The King listened with attention to his Minister, but, in view of the gravity of the decision to be taken, insisted on thoroughly weighing up the points of the problem. The King found the enterprise a tempting one; he did not at any time say "no" to his Minister; he merely desired to elaborate a detailed military and diplomatic plan for submission to the Entente. Apart from military necessities, it was logical that Greece should profit from the troubles of Entente diplomacy in the East in order, like Italy, to secure in anticipation of the victory the formal recognition of all her legitimate aspirations in Turkey and Bulgaria.

But M. Venizelos obstinately refused to imitate the wise example of Italy. He feared that such negotiations might prejudice his personal popularity in London and Paris; that they might be interpreted there as implying distrust towards the very people who had been singing the praises of his genius, and in whom, with a perspicacity worthy of a better cause, he already foresaw a means of support against his own fellow-citizens. Besides, if he was to be believed, these were friends who, after the victory, would sooner despoil themselves than poorly reward so generous a little ally. How great was his error! Some years later, in 1923, at the time of the Lausanne negotiations, M. Venizelos watched in impotence the defeat of all his expectations; he found himself ignored or scoffed at by the very people in whom he had specially placed his confidence! M. Venizelos had, too, his own

<sup>1</sup> M. Venizelos greatly deceived himself; the great French offensive in the Champagne, which took place at this time, remained without result precisely through insufficiency of munitions.

difficulties : if he negotiated conditions for the entry of Greece into the war, he would be admitting that the policy of his adversaries was well founded, and his pride could not bear that. He was infuriated by the raillery of his adversaries over the fate of his strategic prophecies on the Dardanelles. M. Venizelos saw in the war a sort of *revanche* ; his one dream was of calling the Allies to Salonica. But under Article 32 of the Greek Constitution the King alone has the final decision as to war or peace. And, according to Article 99, no foreign army may cross Greek territory or be stationed there unless a special law giving the necessary permission has previously been passed by the Chamber. Finally, in every constitutional State the spirit of the law requires that before plunging his country into a war a statesman should consult his competent military authorities, that is to say his general staff. M. Venizelos could not do violence to the prerogatives of the Crown, and he dared not affront the Chamber in this matter for fear of public opinion. As he was also unable to refute the technical objections of the general staff, he had to resort to a ruse in order to impose upon the country, in contempt of the Constitution, the absolutism of his personal policy. It is from that day that the subversive part that he playcd dates.

## IV

At 4 p.m. on 22nd September M. Venizelos left Tatoi ; he had just had an audience with the King concerning the mobilization that was about to be decreed as a measure of precaution against Bulgaria. The audience had been a short one. M. Venizelos had spoken again to the King about his project of calling the Allies to Salonica ; but the King had refused to discuss it until he had received the reports that would enable him to form a clear opinion on the subject. An hour later, at 5 p.m., M. Venizelos wrote a long letter to the King further arguing the case for an Allied landing at Salonica. The King was astonished at this letter ; it seemed out of place, but on reflection he soon asked himself whether it was not perhaps intended to cover some furtive manœuvre of his Minister. He at once sent his Chamberlain, M. Mercatis, to M. Venizelos to make inquiries.

M. Mercatis reached M. Venizelos at 7.30 p.m. To his intense surprise M. Venizelos informed him that he had just made overtures to the British, French and Russian Ministers, requesting those Powers to land at Salonica as soon as possible an army of 150,000 men, to fulfil the Serbian obligations towards Greece in the war to be undertaken against Bulgaria. M. Venizelos, who seemed greatly embarrassed, hastened to reassure his astounded visitor. His overtures, he said, had a *strictly personal character* and *in no way implicated the State!* On the following day M. Venizelos used this same paradox to justify himself in the eyes of the King. The King refused to accept this over-subtle fiction, and demanded of his Minister, in conformity with the categorical text of the above quoted Articles of the Constitution, the immediate ending of the matter by the pure and simple cancellation of his overtures. M. Venizelos promised to obey, but took care not to do so ; he came to an understanding with M. Guillemin, the French Minister, who two days later visited the King in order formally to state that *the matter was ended* and the action of M. Venizelos considered null and void. But it transpires from the revelations of M. Delcassé in the secret meeting of the French Chamber of 16th June, 1916, that this action of M. Guillemin was a pure imposture. M. Delcassé said :—

“ We ourselves made a promise on 23rd September—not the end of October, but 23rd September—we replied to M. Venizelos, in these words : The French Government desires to place Greece in a position in which the obligations of her Treaty with Serbia will be fulfilled, and is ready, for its part, to supply the troops asked for.<sup>1</sup> . . . Accordingly, on 24th September, forty-eight hours after his request, M. Venizelos was assured of the co-operation of Britain and France.”<sup>2</sup>

It appears from the foregoing that at the moment when M. Guillemin was making his solemn declaration to the King in the name of France, he knew very well that, far from

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919 (Secret Sitting of 16th June, 1916), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919 (Secret Sitting of 16th June, 1916), p. 77

being cancelled, the overtures of M. Venizelos had been definitely accepted, since he himself had communicated their acceptance to M. Venizelos the previous evening.

It is only fair to observe that Sir Edward Grey, on this occasion, showed himself to be much more concerned for the realities of the case than the French Government. On 23rd September Sir Edward telegraphed to Sir Francis Elliot :—

A considerable time would be required before 150,000 men could be landed at Salonica, but a comparatively small contingent could of course be sent in a short time to Salonica with a view to convey to Bulgaria evidence of our intention to support Serbia and Greece

Meanwhile M. Venizelos, scared at the consequences of his secret and illegal invitations to the Allies, and fearing also that the Allies, once they had landed troops at Salonica, might do violence to Greece in order to do a favour to Bulgaria, made a number of contradictory statements. Thus, on 25th September, Sir Francis Elliot telegraphed to his Government : “M. Venizelos states that, so far as he is concerned, all will go well, but that it would be imprudent to despatch troops before he had obtained the King's assent.”

A few days later, on 1st October, M. Venizelos arrived at the palace in a fury, and, abusing the Entente, announced to the King that a British admiral had arrived at Salonica and was making preparations for a landing, while the French Consul was hiring a number of premises. “I shall protest with the greatest energy,” cried M. Venizelos, quivering with anger, “I shall protest against this unspeakable violation of our territory by the Entente.” “Certainly,” replied the King, “most vigorous protest must be made.” And M. Venizelos rushed to his Ministry to formulate his protest.

Here is the principal passage of the telegram of protest which M. Venizelos sent to the Greek legations in London, Paris, Rome, and Petrograd :—

There is danger of a grave misunderstanding developing between the Entente Powers and Greece. When I suggested the sending of 150,000 men, in order to complete the Serbian contingents in case of a common struggle against Bulgaria, I did not demand this

assistance for Greece but for Serbia, in order to overcome the objection raised against our Alliance, which was rendered obsolete, it was said, by the inability of Serbia to fulfil her engagements. This led me carefully to specify that so long as Greece remained neutral the disembarkation of international troops at Salonica could not receive our official assent. Our neutrality would necessitate our protesting *as a matter of form*, after which matters would proceed as at Mudros.

It follows from these lines that M. Venizelos never dreamt of cancelling his illegal overtures of 22nd September, in spite of his promise to the King that he would do so.

Such a protest was equivalent to a fresh invitation ! The Entente hastened to reassure M. Venizelos, and when M. Guillemin advised him, on 2nd October, of the first sending of Allied troops to Salonica, he duly forwarded his *pro forma* protest.<sup>1</sup>

Only then did King Constantine have certain knowledge that his Minister had duped him, and that he had throughout been staging a farce—in connivance with the foreigner—in order to precipitate his country unconstitutionally into the war.

Moreover, in calling the Allies to Salonica, M. Venizelos in the first place indirectly violated the Fifth Hague Convention, for he called upon the Allies to commit acts prohibited by its first and second Articles ; and in the second place he violated it directly, since this Convention lays on neutrals the obligation not to suffer such acts to be carried out on their soil by belligerents.

From this moment the relations between the King and M. Venizelos became of necessity extremely strained. The Prime Minister, realizing that he had violated the Constitution, and that, from that time onwards, the Crown was within its rights if it used its constitutional prerogatives against him, pondered only the means of bringing about his own fall, and surrounding it with the most favourable conditions for his foreign popularity. He desired in falling to gain the martyr's halo ! He succeeded with his customary

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Grey tried to prevent this protest, he feared that it might damage the moral credit of the Entente.

cleverness. On 5th October, 1915, he suddenly, to the general surprise of the Chamber, delivered a warlike speech against Germany, which the latter could not but take as a *casus belli*. King Constantine, who at that moment had no intention of departing from neutrality, was forced at once to dismiss his disloyal Minister, availing himself of Article 31 of the Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

From that day M. Venizelos, as he had desired, was in the eyes of the Allies a great and noble victim of their cause, fallen on account of his desire to fight Germany! And King Constantine, for having prudently refused to enter the war without rifles or guns, or to make of his country a tit-bit for the Germans, was treated as an agent of the Emperor William! The journalists brought to bear all the resources of their exuberant dialectics in the service of this odious campaign.

It may be objected that Entente diplomacy had, perhaps, some interest in precipitating Greece into disaster. Assuredly it had none! But at the time of the Bulgarian "defection" the ignorance as to the position of affairs, the delusions of arm-chair strategists, and the general infatuation of the Allied leaders placed them at the mercy of the most astonishing misconceptions.

It should be observed, however, that M. Venizelos, in spite of his passion for intervention, was far from himself believing in Entente victory. On 5th October, several hours before his dismissal, he let slip the following enlightening avowal in the Chamber: "I doubt if there lives a man who can predict the outcome of the European war."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, from October, 1915, onwards, the Entente Press continually declared that it was on the invitation of M. Venizelos that the Allies went to Salonica. And that was the truth. For a long time M. Venizelos denied this with furious energy, so much so as to deceive several men of generous spirit in Entente countries, who took his defence in good faith against their own country. Among others may

<sup>1</sup> Article 31 of the Greek Constitution: *The King appoints and dismisses his Ministers*

<sup>2</sup> See *Speeches of M. Venizelos* at the sittings of Parliament on 22nd and 28th September, and October, 1915 *Patris*, Athens.

be quoted the case of Mr. Outhwaite, the English Liberal Member, who, believing in the veracity of M. Venizelos, attacked Sir Edward Grey on 18th April, 1916, accusing the Entente Governments of violating Greece.

It will not be without interest to quote from the Russian White Book the telegram sent by M. Demidov, Russian Minister at Athens, to Petrograd on 6th October, describing the views of the Allied Ministers at Athens on the speech which led to M. Venizelos' dismissal.

The premature declarations of Venizelos in the Chamber provoked a rupture between him and the King. Unfortunately Venizelos allowed himself to be carried away, he declared his interventionist policy, *contrary to our advice, without awaiting* the completion of the mobilization and the development of the grave events that were happening. His haste is indeed a piece of folly, especially as he knows the endeavours of the King to keep out of the war.

One is at a loss to know how to condemn with sufficient severity the action of this Prime Minister for thus involving foreign diplomats in the internal affairs of his own country.

## V

The announcement of the Bulgarian mobilization provoked first amazement and then panic among the French leaders. M. Delcassé, one of the two persons chiefly responsible for the first Balkan blunders of the Entente, was obliged to resign office. In the country there was an outbreak of ill-will towards England, who was regarded as largely responsible for the Balkan disappointments. The demand was made in Paris that France should now undertake the direction of the Entente policy in the East, and the British gradually resigned themselves to this.

Those persons in France who had long been advocating the sending of an expeditionary force to Salonica had their opportunity now. Encouraged by the invitations and secret incitements of M. Venizelos, they carried the day in Paris; and this in spite of the bitter resistance of the politicians inspired by M. Clemenceau. The point of view of the future Prime Minister of France was that so long as the Germans were at Noyon it was impossible to attempt important

operations in distant fields. M. Clemenceau was right. Nine months later, on 16th June, 1916, M. Briand admitted to the Chamber, sitting in Secret Committee, that the expeditionary force had not yet been able to complete its supplies of matériel for an offensive. It needed three years more, the American alliance, and the entry of Greece herself into the war to create a sufficient attacking force at Salonica.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this all: it also needed above all the weakening of the German front in France in 1918, with the consequent almost complete withdrawal of the Germans from Macedonia to enable this force effectually to take the offensive.

The Salonica expedition had been decided on on the spur of the moment, without any previous study or preparation. No examination of the possibilities of sea or land transport, of the sanitary difficulties or of the topographical difficulties in Macedonia had preceded the decision. No one knew what were the possibilities of sending troops or matériel there or how long it would require to do so. Trust was placed in what was considered to be the very audacity of the idea, and reliance was placed above all on the Greek army. As M. Briand told the Secret Committee on 16th June, 1916, the Powers went in the *hope* that in so doing they would enable M. Venizelos to involve Greece.<sup>2</sup> Yet, incredible as it might seem, Paris made no inquiry whether the Greek army was in a fit state to enter the war at a day's notice.

"M. Millerand had promised that the effectives of the expeditionary corps should not exceed 30,000 men. They soon amounted to some hundreds of thousands," wrote M. Clemenceau, indignantly, in *l'Homme Enchaîné* of 14th June, 1917.

On the morrow of the Bulgarian "defection" the disappointment was so great in Paris that a *gesture* was necessary, and that *gesture* was Salonica. But the French contingents were actually landed at Salonica without even maps of the country in which they were to operate! And it was the Greek general staff, under the Minister Skouloudis, that relieved General Sarrail of his embarrassment by giving

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see the admissions of M. A. Tardieu to the French Chamber (Chapter VI)

<sup>2</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919, p. 79.

him its confidential maps of the Salonica region. Yet, some days later, part of the Paris Press described this general staff as "sold to the Boches" !

At the moment when the Germans penetrated into Serbian territory, all were at sixes and sevens in Paris, and views were constantly changing. Here, for instance, is the part played by M. Delcassé, as revealed at the sitting of the Chamber in Secret Committee on 16th June, 1916.<sup>1</sup> M. Delcassé stated that when the French Minister at Athens had transmitted to him M. Venizelos' question whether the Allies could send 150,000 men to Greece, he had been startled, for, he declared :—

The prospect of sending French soldiers abroad while the enemy was on French soil alarmed me, I was always against this, for it was clear to me that it was primarily against France that Germany would direct her efforts in order to crush us ; France, with the support of Britain, Russia, Italy, Spain, was freed by her alliances and her ententes from the need of diverting any of her soldiers and ought to consolidate all her forces on the frontier where the German blow was delivered. .

But M. Venizelos' question had been put and had to be answered. An affirmative reply would offer the means of sounding the King of Greece !

This last phrase is of great importance. When, thanks to foreign bayonets, M. Venizelos returned to power in 1917, he affirmed in his "revelations" of that time that it was with the assent of the King that he invited the Allies to Salonica, but that the King drew back afterwards. But M. Delcassé declares that M. Venizelos acted apart from, and without the knowledge of the King, who still needed to be sounded ! M. Delcassé added that with the approval of the Government he sent on 28th September the telegram already mentioned to the French Minister in Athens informing M. Venizelos that France, "desiring to place Greece in a position to fulfil the obligations of her Treaty with Serbia, is ready to furnish the troops asked for. This telegram was at once communicated to Sir Edward Grey, who approved it."

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th June, 1919, p. 77.

From M. Delcassé's speech it appears that M. Venizelos' interventionist obsession was so great that, in order to deprive his country of any possibility of remaining neutral, he secretly warned M. Delcassé that the Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance was purely defensive—"and how great a misfortune it would be if the Serbs were to deliver a preventive attack upon Bulgaria! The Greek neutralists would see in that a perfectly legal justification for preserving neutrality!" This, according to M. Delcassé, was between 26th and 29th September.<sup>1</sup>

Further on M. Delcassé declared that towards the beginning of October the Russians absolutely refused to co-operate at Salonica. "Do not ask any further effort from us," they said.<sup>2</sup> Italy, too, informed him that militarily she was not in a position to participate. And M. Delcassé, after agreeing to M. Venizelos' request for the sending of 150,000 combatants to Salonica, was clearly disturbed by the number of obstacles and returned to his original support of abstention. He said :—

It was then that, contrary to the clearly expressed sentiments of our British Allies, and in spite of the clearly announced abstention of the Italians and Russians, we embarked on an enterprise concerning which, in a note that was communicated to me as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the General Commanding the French Armies wrote on 4th October to the Government—this is verbatim—that, in the present state of our resources, when the reduced strength of our depots was compelling us to consider the reduction of our first line effectives, to disperse our forces in Serbia would be absolute madness.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that shortly after this General Joffre changed his opinion and even advised this expedition in face of British hesitancy. These contradictions by M. Delcassé provoked violent protests at the secret sitting of the French Chamber.

From this debate it appears :—

(1) That M. Venizelos acted in the matter without the knowledge of the Crown, and therefore unconstitutionally,

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919, pp 76-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919, p 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919, p. 79.

and that he secretly intrigued to deprive his country of any legal means of remaining neutral ;

(2) That the French Government of the day undertook to furnish the 150,000 men without any certainty as to when or how these troops would reach their destination, or when or how the Greek army would be equipped by the Allies.

From 25th September onwards a vigorous campaign was conducted in the leading Paris papers in favour of the despatch of an expeditionary corps to Salonica, with the object of supporting Serbia, and Greece too, if the need arose, against Bulgarian aggression. The same French papers that a fortnight before had proposed the brutal amputation of Greece for the benefit of friendly Bulgaria, and had been heaping the most undeserved epithets upon her King, now rivalled one another in flattering him.

On 28th September Sir Edward Grey had delivered the speech in which he made a sort of declaration of love towards the Bulgarians. Greek opinion, which had been deeply wounded during recent months by the activities of Entente diplomacy, thought in perfect good faith that the Allies were searching for an opportunity to renew negotiations at the expense of Greece. On 1st October, to the great surprise of all clear-sighted people, the *Times* declared that the only durable settlement of Balkan affairs consisted, in Sir Edward Grey's words, "in the territorial and political union of the sister nationalities" <sup>1</sup>.

In London the fact was persistently ignored that those who desire to reconcile quarrelling relatives too often only succeed in bringing them to blows. History has never known a Balkan Union. That which has never existed cannot be reconstituted.

It was not until the first days of October that the Entente diplomats at last took the heroic resolution to inform Athens that the offers made in September to Bulgaria, at the expense of Greece, should henceforth be considered as cancelled !

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks have no racial relationship with the Bulgarians, who are of the Finno-Ugrian race, and came from the banks of the Volga at the end of the seventh century

The gesture was no doubt a happy one, but it came too late. Suspicion and mistrust of Entente diplomacy had spread far too widely in Greece. This was realized in London and Paris well enough, but, rather than admit past blunders, it was preferred by a puerile evasion to attribute Greek ill-humour to the untruths propagated by Baron von Schenk.

## CHAPTER V

### ZAIMIS MINISTRY

(October–November, 1915)

The Zaimis Ministry—Benevolent neutrality.—The Anglo-French armies land at Salonica—Bulgaria declares war on Serbia—The Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance; Greece is accused of violating it, but care is taken to avoid proving it by the publication of the text—Greece as scapegoat—The apocryphal telegrams of M. Passaroff.—Britain offers Cyprus to Greece.—The *Temps* denounces the serious delay in the despatch of Allied troops to Salonica and blames England for it—General Sarrail—Resignation of M. Zaimis

#### I

King Constantine was far from desiring a ministerial crisis at such a moment, and M. Venizelos' manœuvre caused him serious embarrassment. In normal times the solution of the crisis would have been a very simple matter. The Crown would have called to power a business Government, dissolved the Chamber, proceeded to elections within the period prescribed by the Constitution, and finally would have submitted to the verdict of the people.

But on 6th October, 1915, the army had been completely mobilized and the horizon was charged with thunder clouds. Under such conditions an appeal to the electorate was not desirable. The only resource, therefore, was for the King to retain the Chamber and to endeavour to find a politician who could command a majority.

In order, however, that a Government might be acceptable to the majority it was necessary that it should have the support of M. Venizelos, to whom the majority of the Deputies were attached by strong personal ties. The King therefore called upon M. Zaimis, the Governor of the National Bank, who, being outside party politics, had a chance of being

tolerated by M. Venizelos. The choice of M. Zaimis had the further advantage that it did not imply any particular tendency in foreign policy. M. Venizelos consented, and M. Zaimis formed a Cabinet which included all the former Prime Ministers.

## II

Now that M. Venizelos, by means of his intrigues, had brought the Allies to Salonica, they considered that they had thereby acquired rights over Greek sovereignty, and were determined to profit by the fact. M. Zaimis, in agreement with the King, hastened to instruct the Greek authorities in Macedonia to render all possible assistance to the Allied troops proceeding to Serbia<sup>1</sup>; at the same time he formally declared to the Entente that Greece would continue to maintain *benevolent neutrality*.

This new and strange definition of neutrality, vague, elastic, and negative, was the undoing of Greece. For thenceforward the Allies continually applied this conception in order to legitimize the grave violations by which they endeavoured to drag Greece into the war.

## III

The Allied disembarkation at Salonica began on 5th October.

From a legal point of view the Allied landing at Salonica was a violation of Articles 1 and 2 of the Fifth Hague Convention, for it is easy to show that the particular features which the case of Salonica presented, and which distinguished it from that of the islands, amounted only to extenuating circumstances and not to justification.

It has been claimed that the Allies had the right to land at Salonica in order to go to the assistance of the Serbs because Greece, in spite of her treaty of alliance with the Serbs, was refusing to give them assistance. It must, however, be pointed out that the Allies did not originally put

<sup>1</sup> On this King Constantine gave the most explicit assurances to the Allied Ministers at Athens. (Russian White Book, 1922, telegram of 6th October, 1915, No. 443.)

forward this complaint against Greece. The following is the text of the letter in which the French Minister at Athens announced the landing to M. Venizelos on 2nd October, 1915 :

Under instructions from my Government I have the honour to announce to Your Excellency the disembarkation at Salonica of a first detachment of French troops, and at the same time to state that Britain and France, allies of Serbia, are sending their troops to her aid in order to maintain their communications with her. The two Powers count upon Greece, who has up to the present given nothing but proofs of friendship, not to oppose the step taken in the interest of Serbia, to whom Greece is also allied.

It will be seen that there was as yet no question of Greece's forgetfulness of her duties as an ally. It was not until later that the charge of treachery to Serbia was formulated against Greece, when the French Chamber went as far as to speak in its Order of the Day of 27th January, 1917, of a "Greece who has turned aside from her duty".

Could the reason put forward by the French Minister as justification for the landing at Salonica be seriously maintained ? There is no clause in the Fifth Convention which authorizes the transgression of its prescriptions for any reason. Nowhere is the stipulation to be found that "the allies of our allies are our allies "

#### IV

Meanwhile, on 12th October, Bulgaria declared war on Serbia. A short time previously the Serbian Government, foreseeing an imminent attack by Bulgaria, and maintaining that this would produce a *casus foederis* under the Greco-Serb Treaty, had inquired of the Government at Athens whether the Greek army was ready to enter into action against Bulgaria.

The reply of the Greek Government was as follows :—

Athens,  
29th September/12th October, 1915

The Royal Government greatly regrets that it is unable to accede to the demand formulated by the Serbian Government.

In the first place it considers, in the existing circumstances, that the *casus foederis* has not arisen. The alliance concluded in 1913, having in view a Bulgarian attack, and aiming at establishing and preserving an equilibrium of power among the States of the Peninsula after the distribution of conquests made in common from the Ottoman Empire, has, under the preamble of the Treaty, a purely Balkan character which does not at all involve its application in the event of a general conflagration. In spite of the general nature of the terms of Article 1, the Treaty of Alliance and the military convention which completes it prove that the contracting parties had in view only the possibility of an isolated attack by Bulgaria against one or other of them. Article 4 of the military convention itself furnishes proof of this, for, with the object of limiting the co-operation of one of the allies already occupied elsewhere, it prescribes no other *casus foederis* than an attack by Bulgaria on the other ally. Nowhere does the question arise of the concerted attack of two or more Powers. On the contrary, broad as are the terms of the general provisions of Article 1 of the military convention, it is limited by the hypothesis of a war between one of the two allied States and a single other Power. It could not be otherwise, it would have been an act of mad presumption to provide for the co-operation, in the event of one of the parties being at war with several States at once, of the manifestly powerless and negligible armed forces of the other party.

Now there is no doubt that it is just this hypothesis that applies to-day. If the Bulgarian attack which the Serbian Government apprehends takes place, it will be the result of a concerted agreement with Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey. It will form part of the attack already undertaken against Serbia by the two Central Empires. It will be an episode of the European war. The Serbian Government will itself have recognized this character in advance by breaking off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria in imitation of its European Allies, the Entente Powers, without previous agreement with its Balkan ally, Greece. It is therefore evident that the case is outside both the provisions and the spirit of our alliance.

But the Royal Government is not only convinced that, in the circumstances, no contractual obligation rests upon it. It is also persuaded that its armed co-operation, spontaneously offered at such a moment, would ill serve the common interests of the two countries. It has served this interest by remaining neutral in the European war, believing that the best service it could render to Serbia would be to hold Bulgaria in check, maintaining the integrity

of its forces and the freedom of its communications in view of any attack by her. It has always been ready to face the Bulgarian danger, even should it materialize during the course of the European war, although Serbia was already fighting against two Great Powers. That is why, when Bulgaria mobilized, it hastened to reply at once with the general mobilization of its army. But it has always had in view a Bulgarian attack made separately, although in connexion with the other hostilities undertaken against Serbia. The hypothesis of an attack planned in combination with other Powers has been and must remain outside its calculations. For by intervening in such a case Greece would perish herself without the least hope of saving Serbia. Serbia obviously could not desire such a result. The common interest requires, on the contrary, that the Greek forces should still be held in reserve with a view to being employed to greater advantage later on.

It is desirable, therefore, that Greece should remain neutral and armed, and that she should attentively watch the course of events, determined always to protect the interests common to Serbia and herself by the most appropriate means, at the same time safeguarding her own vital interests.

Being convinced that the Serbian Government will appreciate the justice of the reasons that prevent Greece, under the present circumstances, from promising her armed co-operation, the Royal Government, while profoundly regretting the material impossibility of giving more assistance to Serbia at present, desires to assure her that, true to its friendship, it will continue to accord her every assistance and facility compatible with its international position.

Be good enough to read the foregoing to M. Pashitch

ZAIMIS

To sum up, M. Zaimis' note drew the conclusion that the Treaty of Alliance only provided for an inter-Balkan war, and could not apply to the entirely unforeseen circumstances of a European conflagration.

The Greco-Serb Treaty is composed of two parts:—

(1) The Treaty of Alliance and (2) its complement the military convention.<sup>1</sup> These two connected parts form a single and indivisible whole; the non-execution of any

<sup>1</sup> See the complete text of the Greco-Serb Treaty in *Livre Blanc grec*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1918.

particular clause of one part makes the whole null and void ; there is no possible doubt as to this : it is a fundamental principle of law, universally admitted. The above reply of M. Zaimis is an interpretation perfectly in accord with the spirit of the text, so far as concerns the special circumstances in view of which the Treaty was conceived and elaborated. This reply was, moreover, drawn up by M Politis himself, who was formerly a naturalized Frenchman and Professor of Law in the University of Paris, and who returned to his country of origin in 1914 in order to take up the post of Director-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It should be noted that M. Politis, author of this interpretation, declared, to whoever cared to listen at that time, that it was an interpretation entirely in conformity with French legal conceptions. It is true that a year later, in 1916, having deserted his post to join the pseudo-revolutionary movement of M. Venizelos, at Salonica, M. Politis not only denied his past opinion, but even qualified it as abject treason and imputed it to King Constantine !

There is no interpretation of the spirit of any law that a clever and interested lawyer cannot contest. Therein, unfortunately, lies an evil difficult to avoid. But even admitting that an impartial and rigorous legal examination might lead to the rejection of the interpretation of MM. Zaimis and Politis and to the admission of the opposite argument, the Greek Government was none the less justified in maintaining neutrality. In virtue of Article 2 of the military convention annexed to the Treaty, Greece was only bound to intervene if Serbia concentrated *at the commencement* of hostilities *an armed force* of 150,000 men against Bulgaria, and along a fixed line. Greece continually insisted on this at the time.

The following is the complete text of Article 2<sup>1</sup> :—

*At the commencement of hostilities, at whatever moment they may commence, Greece is required to have an army of 80,000 fighting forces concentrated in the region between Mount Pangaion, Salonica and Gumenitsa, and Serbia an army of 150,000 fighting forces concentrated in the region of Ghevgheli, Veles (Kroprulu), Koumanovo, Pirot.*

<sup>1</sup> See *Livre Blanc grec*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, p 15.

*Greece is at the same time to have her fleet, ready for action, in the Ægean Sea*

For Serbia, however, attacked from other quarters in the north, and with her army decimated by a year of war, it was materially impossible to satisfy the stipulations of this essential article of the Treaty. M. Venizelos was the first to grasp this fact. This was the cause of his overtures of 22nd September, already mentioned, to the Entente Ministers at Athens, asking for 150,000 British and French troops to replace the Serbians. The London and Paris Governments admitted the reasonableness of the Greek interpretation of this article, and M. Delcassé—as has been seen—telegraphed at once, with the approval of Sir Edward Grey, to the French Minister at Athens :—

You may inform M. Venizelos that the Government of the Republic, desiring to place Greece in a position to fulfil her obligations under her Treaty with Serbia, is ready to furnish the troops asked for<sup>1</sup>

This point cannot, therefore, be contested : if certain parts of the Treaty admit of legal controversy, Article 2 of the military convention renders the case for Greek neutrality unassailable, since both London and Paris, on 23rd September, categorically admitted that without the execution of the clauses of this Article by Serbia (or by the Allies, acting as substitutes for Serbia), Greece could not be bound by any of the obligations devolving upon her under her Treaty of Alliance with her neighbour.

Unfortunately, at this period France had imprudently assumed a task at Salonica which was beyond the powers of the Entente.

When the difficulties of agreement among the Allies regarding transport and organization became apparent, when the German and Bulgarian forces overran Serbia, while the Allies failed to land at Salonica, the French promoters of the expedition, frightened by the attacks of their political opponents and fearing a public opinion disillusioned and alarmed, felt that it was necessary at all costs to cover

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919 (Secret Sitting of 16th June, 1916, M. Delcassé's speech, p. 77).

up their ignorance and initial blunders. In order to do this they had recourse to what is called at the Palais-Bourbon a *diversion*, followed by the inevitable subterfuge of the *scapé-goat*. They began by stretching a thick veil of implacable censorship over every fact that might destroy confidence in themselves, and then, through the organs that dispensed official truth, and with M. Venizelos' assistance, they most cleverly spread the belief that if the Serbians were falling back, if the German and Bulgarian forces were advancing, it was the fault of Greece! For Greece, they added with emphasis, was Serbia's ally, and in failing to go to Serbia's aid she had been a traitor to her Ally and Serbia necessarily perished!

Needless to say, the detractors of Greece and her King never for a moment considered it necessary to put forward any evidence in support of their accusations. The Treaty was secret, and therefore only known in the chancelleries. The Allied Governments overwhelmed Greece through the Press, but neither in London nor Paris nor Petrograd was it ever thought necessary to publish the text that Greece was accused of having violated. The accusers, indeed, feared nothing so much as public discussion; for to divulge the text of Article 2 of the military convention would have been to make public the engagements which they had entered into with Greece and had not carried out.

Greece for her part could not publish the secret Treaty without the assent of the other contracting party.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the origin of the campaign of disparagement which served to bolster up one of the most audacious untruths of the world war.

## V

When in June, 1917, M. Jonnart and foreign bayonets imposed M. Venizelos on the Greek people as dictator, the latter, to allay the intense indignation of the country against himself, resorted to a series of *sensational revelations*—diabolical inventions—in the hope of robbing his King for

<sup>1</sup> The full text of the Greco-Serb Treaty was not published until 1917, after the entry of Greece into the war.

all time of the esteem of his subjects. The most odious of these calumnies was his charge, made before the whole world, that in 1915 his Sovereign had urged the Bulgarians to attack Serbia, assuring them in advance of the neutrality of Greece.

To this end M. Venizelos did not hesitate to make use of forgery, in the form of an apocryphal telegram from M. Passarov, former Bulgarian Minister at Athens, revealed, it was alleged, by one of his puppets.

At the same time, the Venizelos Government ostentatiously commenced a prosecution of M. Skouloudis for the crime of high treason, putting in as evidence a whole series of telegrams alleged to have been sent by Passarov to his Government, and, according to M. Politis, who had become Minister of Foreign Affairs, seriously compromising M. Skouloudis. M. Skouloudis had no difficulty in proving to the examining magistrate (3rd December, 1918) that the telegrams were forgeries. They had been put together in Venizelist offices. The silence to which the accusers resigned themselves immediately after these sensational revelations, afforded plain evidence of their embarrassment.

## VI

On 15th October, 1915, Britain declared war on Bulgaria, and France did the same on 16th October. On 17th October, Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Viviani's speech, saying that the Allies are landing in the Balkans in order to uphold the Treaty of Bucarest, no longer satisfies the Greeks, who are dreaming of bigger compensation. Venizelos tells us that in his opinion the promise of Bulgarian Thrace to Greece by the Entente would enable him to turn Greek feeling in favour of intervention. If, after this tempting offer from the Allies, they also make Greece realize that they are resolved to use coercion against her, then, in the opinion of M. Venizelos, the position of the King would become untenable if he persisted in his passive policy. The French Minister is telegraphing to Paris in this sense.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, published in 1922.

Such was M. Venizelos' subtle plan of action against his country.

It will be of interest to draw attention to the telegram from Paul Cambon, French Ambassador in London, to the Quai d'Orsay on 16th October, 1915. In this telegram M. Cambon reported the proposal of the Foreign Office to take steps to discover King Constantine's intentions towards the Allies at Salonica. Cambon made formal objection to this proposal ; he said :—

It is true that we were called in by Venizelos, and that his protest was a mere form, but he is no longer the head of the Government, and we must not count on the complicity of his successors

The word *complicity* gives special significance to this telegram.

At the Foreign Office it was considered wiser to try persuasion, and to endeavour to draw Greece into the war by some alluring offer. This was particularly desirable in order to reassure Paris, where Britain was being vigorously charged with lukewarmness towards the French initiative at Salonica. Consequently the London Cabinet proposed to Greece the immediate cession to her of Cyprus if she would at once go to the aid of Serbia.

The following is the telegram from Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Elliot :—

FOREIGN OFFICE,

16th October, 1915

Everything that passed between His Majesty's Government and M Venizelos while he was Prime Minister was based on the supposition that Greece would lend her support to Serbia in conformity with her treaty with her

It was a great disappointment for us to learn that Greece had not this intention, and we find the explanation of which M Gennadius has transmitted us a copy hardly satisfying, nor does it appear to free Greece from her engagements.

It is in the firm conviction that it is quite specially in the interest of Greece to prevent the destruction of Serbia that we are asking her to lend her aid to the latter in her capacity of Ally

Now that Serbia has been attacked by Bulgaria, if Greece is willing to come to her aid His Majesty's Government is ready to cede to Greece the island of Cyprus.

If Greece joins the Allies for all purposes, she will naturally participate in the advantages secured at the end of the war, but the offer of Cyprus is made by His Majesty's Government independently of this consideration, and on the sole condition that Greece gives Serbia her immediate and complete support with her army.

Time is pressing and you will ask M. Zaimis to give you his reply without delay

E. GREY<sup>1</sup>

A very important point should be noted here. In this telegram Lord Grey assumes without qualification the binding character for Greece of her Treaty of Alliance with Serbia. This opinion, however, does not appear to have survived the double test of time and reflection, for ten years later Lord Grey wrote in his Memoirs<sup>2</sup> :—

The letter of the treaty might require Greece to fight by Serbia's side against Bulgaria, but did the spirit of the treaty require Greece to take part in a war in which the conflict between Serbia and Bulgaria was only a secondary matter?

In other words Lord Grey entirely admits the interpretation given to the Treaty by the Governments of King Constantine: and departs from the attitude of the semi-official English Press at the time by bringing no charge against Greece either of having "betrayed" Serbia or of having acted dishonourably.

This time Greece was sorely tempted to join in the war. But after mature reflection M. Zaimis and the King, sick at heart, felt obliged to decline this seductive offer. It was a case for the Greek rulers of being caught between Scylla and Charybdis; to accept Cyprus—the great Hellenic island—would mean the loss of Athens! The Germans and Bulgars in their hosts were advancing victoriously, without striking a blow, in Serbia. We have already described the lamentable state of the Greek Army as regards equipment and munitions; by intervening Greece might at best have retarded the Serbian downfall for a few days, but she would have perished herself, without serving any useful purpose.

<sup>1</sup> This letter is given in re-translation from an official French translation in the archives of the French Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> Grey, op. cit., vol. II, p. 215

either for Serbia or for the Entente. Sarrail's army, which alone could have saved the situation at that moment, was still in embryo. This the *Temps* acknowledged indignantly and without circumlocution on 25th October, 1915 :—

Great Britain and France undertook to furnish the 150,000 effectives which under her Treaty of Alliance with Greece Serbia was to send against the Bulgarians . . . but, *as a matter of fact, the French forces that have reached Serbia do not represent anything approaching the intended numbers, and the British have perhaps not yet even crossed the Greco-Serb frontier.*

And on 30th October :—

*The 150,000 men promised are still far from complete.<sup>1</sup>*

As, however, in spite of this engineered anti-Greek campaign, French public opinion began to show signs of impatience at the delays and inefficiency of the expedition to Salonica, the campaign of "diversion" was vigorously intensified : encamped at Salonica, it was said, the Greek army, in connivance with the Germans, threatened the Allied armies on their way to help the Serbians. And the inspired Paris Press at once raised a cry of feigned alarm, and heaped fresh abuse on King Constantine.

Meanwhile the Greek Government protested in vain with all its power against these calumnies.

On 28th October it was announced that the Germans and Bulgarians were about to join forces at the bend of the Danube on the Roumanian frontier. From that moment the cause of the Entente was definitely lost in the Balkans ; since 21st September precious time had been squandered. Not half of the promised 150,000 men had yet reached Salonica ! From that day onwards the German-Bulgarian military situation was greatly strengthened. Subsequent events proved this. Salonica could no longer furnish any result until Germany was defeated at home.

General Joffre went to London to endeavour to persuade the British Government to push on with the Salonica expedition ; but he only had partial success.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lansdowne informed the House of Lords on 26th October that up to that date Britain had only landed 13,000 men at Salonica !

## VII

The Viviani Cabinet appointed General Sarrail Commander in Chief of the expeditionary force at Salonica. This choice was most unfortunate ; of all the French Generals Sarrail was the least suitable ; he was entirely ignorant of the country, as he has himself admitted <sup>1</sup> :—

I arrived in Greece on 12th October, 1915, without any information, without any general official instructions, knowing nothing of the country, of the people, of the events that had taken place since the beginning of the war . I took as my directives my frankly republican views [sic]

These admissions sufficiently reveal the man, but this is not all. General Sarrail had been recalled by General Joffre, and sent away from the French front. This action deprived him of all prestige, especially abroad, but he was sent abroad nevertheless. General Sarrail was a politician, and his presence in Paris after his disgrace might have been troublesome to certain persons in power ; thus they seized the opportunity to banish him to Salonica, far, far from Paris. They were thus rid of him, but they rendered a very bad service to the Entente.

General Sarrail had “ frankly republican ” ideas ; which meant intolerance, anti-clericalism, and victimization of any crowned head whatever. On his arrival in Greece, a country of which “ he knew nothing ”, he was irritated at the sight of priests, churches and a devout people. Ignorant of the fact that among the Greeks orthodoxy was ingrained in the national spirit, he persecuted the clergy, profaned the country churches, commandeered them, even turned them into stables, as in the region of Kilkich—and then congratulated himself on having humiliated “ Greek clericalism ”, *le bon Dieu*, and the King of Greece.

As Britain and France failed to furnish him with sufficient troops to enable him to carry out his missions, after a few vain recriminations against his own Government and that of London he willingly resigned himself to military inactivity,

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de Paris*, 15th December, 1919

in order to give free rein to his political inclinations and to intrigue busily in the internal life of Greece. This he did with all the more vigour as he found in M. Venizelos an ardent associate and a master of intrigue.

The General's first concern was to turn Greece into a republic, for the very word "kingdom" was an injury to his convictions. Then his policy became a strange amalgam of inconsequences. Sarrail invented the Constantine menace in his rear ; he made use of this myth every time his inactivity had to be explained before public opinion.

M. Venizelos made full use of the sectarian spirit of the General in the satisfaction of his own grudges. But the two men, after a marvellous fraternity, ended by quarrelling, and a year after the war General Sarrail charged his former partner with "unscrupulousness", and accused him of duplicity and even of bad faith!<sup>1</sup> The General added that "nearly all M. Venizelos' compatriots could, more or less, be bought". But as, according to his own statement, he only had dealings with Venizelists, it was no doubt in their ranks that he gained this conviction.

The Greeks were not alone in complaining of Sarrail ; the General quarrelled from the first with all the Allies ; British, Italians, Russians and Serbs spent months urging his recall to Paris. But in spite of the spectacle of decomposition presented by the eastern army, MM. Briand, Ribot, and Painlevé, for reasons of internal policy, refused in turn to recall the turbulent general. Only Clemenceau had the courage to recall him on 7th December, 1917.

"The Eastern army," said Clemenceau to the Deputies who interrogated him, "is breaking up ; it no longer has any discipline, the number of men on furlough is beyond count. All our Allies have demanded that Sarrail be replaced. If we were to retain him our responsibility would be immense, for a German-Bulgarian offensive against Salonica is always possible, and it is not with disunited armies, whose leaders refuse to know one another, that a stand could be made".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de Paris*, 15th December, 1919

<sup>2</sup> Mermeix, *Le Commandement Unique*, Part 2, p. 138. P. Ollendorff, Paris.

## VIII

On 4th November M. Zaimis resigned as a result of a vote of the Chamber on general policy. A gesture of disrespect of the War Minister's towards Parliament furnished M. Venizelos with the opportunity to make an inflammatory speech against Greece. Under cover of pretended patriotism he denounced to the Entente the legitimate neutrality of his country. The Entente, or rather France, maddened by the delays in its action at Salonica, eagerly grasped the hand held out by the misguided Greek politician. M. Venizelos in this case revived an evil Byzantine practice ; he appealed to the foreigner in an internal dispute in Greece.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ENTRY OF THE SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY

*(November and December, 1915)*

The Skouloudis Cabinet —The Dissolution of the Chamber under the Skouloudis Ministry was Constitutional —Electoral conditions — The Elections of 19th December, 1915 —The Skouloudis Cabinet and the Entente , first incident , the ultimatum of 23rd November —The application of the demands of the Entente formulated in the ultimatum of 23rd November —Greece is under Treaties an unrestrictedly independent and sovereign State —M Denys Cochin and Lord Kitchener in Greece —The events of the beginning of December and the part played by General Sarrail —Disagreement among the Allies regarding the prosecution of the Salonica expedition —M Guillemin and M de Roquenfouil.—The legend of the supply of stores to German submarines by Greece —The retreat of General Sarrail on Salonica —By intervention in Berlin King Constantine succeeds in arresting the forces of the Central Powers at the Greek frontier , Sarrail and the Anglo-French army are saved from disaster —General de Castelnau proposes the assassination of King Constantine —Confirmations and revelations concerning this period contained in official Russian documents — Proofs of the conspiracy in official French documents

#### I

After M. Zaimis' resignation King Constantine offered the premiership to M. Skouloudis, who, owing to his age, his social position, his integrity and his well-known sympathy towards Britain, was entirely the man for the occasion. Besides this, M. Venizelos held M. Skouloudis in such high esteem that he had drawn him almost forcibly from his retirement in 1912 in order to make him President of the Greek delegation to London for the peace negotiations after the first Balkan war. But for this effort on the part of M. Venizelos M. Skouloudis would never have re-entered the political arena.

M. Skouloudis retained all the members of the Zaimis Cabinet, in order to show clearly that his accession to power would involve no modification in Greek policy towards the Entente. In addition to this he sent the telegraphic circular of 8th November, 1915, to the Greek Legations in London, Paris, Rome and Petrograd, instructing them to give the most formal assurance to the respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs of his firm resolve to continue the most sincerely benevolent neutrality towards the Entente.<sup>1</sup>

On the same day M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Chargé d'Affaires in Serbia<sup>2</sup> :—

In conversation with the Serbian Government you will be good enough to convey the most explicit assurances of our firm determination to continue to furnish every assistance and support compatible with our vital interests

M. Skouloudis, from tradition, desired the victory of Britain and France, but, like every other clear-sighted observer at that time, he could see neither the near approach nor the certainty of this victory. Greek opinion almost unanimously demanded neutrality from him. Moreover Greece, a free and sovereign State, was perfectly justified in remaining neutral if she so desired. Because of his desire to continue this uncontestedly legitimate policy, however, M. Skouloudis was violently attacked in the semi-official foreign Press as a pro-German. This iniquitous accusation was due to a change of policy on the part of the French representatives in Greece, who were no longer contented with a friendly Greece but were determined by intrigue or by force to make her an ally.

After the English Cabinet Council of 4th November, 1915, Sir John Stavridi, the Greek Consul in London, and an intimate friend of Mr. Lloyd George, was authorized by the latter to make a communication to the Greek Government, which he did personally at Athens on 10th November. As M. Skouloudis did not come to power until 7th November, it is clear that this communication was intended for the

<sup>1</sup> See *Livre Blanc grec*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1918, No 37

<sup>2</sup> See *Livre Blanc grec*, Berger-Levrault, Paris, 1918, No 56

Cabinet presided over by M. Zaimis. The following is the text of this communication :—

Mr Lloyd George informed me on Thursday, the 4th November, that at the Cabinet meeting held on that day the proposal made by General Joffre on behalf of the French Government to apply compulsion to Greece had been considered and all the Ministers had been unanimous on the subject

They desired to know definitely whether Greece was for or against the Entente

They also wished to have it stated clearly and without ambiguity that under no circumstances whatsoever would Greece declare a strict neutrality and endeavour to disarm and intern the troops of the Entente, that in view of the fact that twice already promises made by the Greek Government had been broken it would be necessary that such declaration be made with the consent of H M the King and should be made public

Failing this, compulsion would be applied, as the Entente were not prepared to allow their troops to run any danger from Greece

The word compulsion was not defined.

J N STAVRIDI

## II

When M. Skouloudis became Prime Minister he was faced with a Chamber with a small Venizelist majority which was blindly subservient to its chief; there was thus no possibility of loyal discussion, and M. Skouloudis advised the King to dissolve the Chamber and hold a general election which would enable the country to choose for itself between war and peace. Since 18th June events had marched so rapidly in Europe, and especially in the Balkans, that the Chamber was manifestly no longer representative of the electorate. The general election of 13th June had been fought, as has been seen,<sup>1</sup> on questions of internal policy only. In November the critical question of entry into the war was paramount, with all its awful hazards, but in every corner of the kingdom there were lively manifestations in favour of maintaining neutrality. M. Venizelos alone and his tiny entourage stood for war, clamorously supported by the interested foreign

<sup>1</sup> See p 35

Press. The advice given by M. Skouloudis to the King to consult the country was therefore logical and entirely in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

As a matter of fact the King has, according to the letter of the Constitution, *absolute and entirely unreserved right of dissolution* (Article 37 of the Constitution : *The King has the right to dissolve the Chamber*). Needless to say the King could not abuse his right and dissolve a Chamber two or three times for the same reason. But he was at liberty to declare a first dissolution if there was a serious reason for doing so, and if he found Ministers prepared to undertake responsibility. He could also dissolve the Chamber two or three times in succession if, immediately after each election, some new circumstance were to arise that made a fresh appeal to the electors desirable. It is not the letter but the spirit of the Greek Constitution that decides the number of dissolutions, and this is borne out by the practice followed in other constitutional monarchies, and the precedents established during the long reign of George I.

The question that arises is therefore merely whether the King dissolved the Chamber under the Skouloudis Ministry, in November, for the same reason as under the Gounaris Ministry in April. It is evident that this was not so. The dissolution of April, as has been seen, was due to the facts that M. Venizelos had resigned in face of the King's refusal to accept his wild proposals regarding the Dardanelles, that the Parliament was almost at the end of its term of office, and that the Provinces freed in 1913 were unrepresented in the Chamber. During the election that followed, on 18th June, M. Venizelos kept out of the way, and his lieutenants were careful to make no mention of the war to the electors. According to M. Venizelos himself the decision of the electors had no bearing either on the question of the Dardanelles or on that of the cession of territory to Bulgaria, but only on the general policy of his party. In M. Venizelos' own words, the people in voting merely expressed their confidence in his party.<sup>1</sup>

The second dissolution, that under the Skouloudis Ministry in November, was decreed because there had been no definite

<sup>1</sup> Supplement to the *Patris* (speeches of 21st and 22nd September, 1915)

question laid before the people at the election of 13th June. It arose out of the disagreement in October between the King and M. Venizelos, not in respect of the Greco-Serb Treaty, as was malignantly suggested by the semi-official press, but of the interpretation of that Treaty and the material possibility of the execution of Serbia's obligations towards Greece arising out of the Treaty and undertaken by France and Britain. When M. Skouloudis came into power the strength of 150,000 effectives promised by the Entente was still far from being reached, and the munitions of war with which—if Paris was to be believed—Salonica was shortly to be abundantly supplied, had still not arrived ! Meanwhile, in spite of the formal engagements they had assumed towards Greece, Paris and London had let time slip while they discussed the opportunities of the Salonica expedition, and thus allowed the Serbian army to be utterly destroyed ! This fact totally reversed the proportions of the opposing forces in the Balkans, discouraged Greece, and rendered any intervention on her part at such a moment an absurdity.

In November the German and Bulgar forces, after conquering the whole of Serbia, marched victoriously to the Greek frontier, driving back the weak and ill-armed contingents of General Sarrail. From every part of Greece came ceaseless petitions favouring neutrality. One discordant voice alone was heard at Athens, that of M. Venizelos, who, furious at the bitter attacks of his adversaries and their denunciations of his strategical mistakes, obstinately persisted, in defiance of all good sense, in advocating intervention on the lines of his scheme of the end of September.

The Skouloudis Cabinet and King Constantine were thus faced with a tragic dilemma : to enter the war would expose the country to certain and inevitable military disaster ; to remain neutral would irritate the maritime powers, whose friendship was indispensable to Greece.

Consequently, on the advice of M. Skouloudis, the King decreed the dissolution of the Chamber, in order that the *sovereign nation* itself might choose between peace and war, in face of the formidable developments that had taken place since the elections of June. The future historian will be

horrified at the idea that this ultra-liberal action of King Constantine should have been condemned as "unconstitutional" or "absolutist" by certain of his contemporaries, and should have been the basis for several years of the most malicious calumnies. Is it conceivable that the Head of a State should be accused of absolutism for feeling it his duty to consult his people, to consult them on a question of life and death?

King Constantine, then, in making use of his constitutional prerogatives, acted in strict conformity with established precedent and with Greek constitutional tradition as based on the history of the preceding half century.

The Greek Chamber was actually dissolved fourteen times between 1868 and 1910, and nearly every time under a Ministry with a parliamentary minority. Never for a moment during this long period did it occur to the British or French Governments that their countries were the guarantors of the Greek Constitution, and that they had in consequence the right to interfere in Greece for the sake of the re-establishment of constitutionality. This occurred to them for the first time in the year of grace 1915, when the personal ambitions of certain French leaders required the impounding of the liberties of Hellas.

Let us finally recall that M. Venizelos himself, in his speech to the Chamber of 9th October, 1910, said : "Every time that the Chamber, single or double, is *in opposition to popular opinion*, the dissolution of the Chamber is not only a *right* but a *duty* of the Crown, in order that the people may express their definite opinion on the affairs of the country."

It is evident, then, that in 1910 M. Venizelos admitted formally and in the most explicit manner a constitutional right and duty of the Crown which in 1915 he thought fit to deny.

### III

The only shortcoming that could be charged against King Constantine at that period is the fact that the army was not demobilized in order to enable the 265,000 voters under arms to take part in the election. This, however, was not a grave matter. The King and M. Skouloudis had been

seriously occupied with it from the outset, and they had determined to demobilize almost entirely, in order to regularize the general election. Unhappily a serious obstacle obtruded itself: Allied diplomacy, partly by threats, partly by entreaty, put strong pressure on the Greek Government not to demobilize; the Entente informed Greece that if she withdrew the garrisons from her Macedonian frontiers the Allied troops would decline all responsibility, in the event of invasion by the Bulgarians, for the sectors and provinces evacuated. This announcement had all the more effect in Athens because of the knowledge of the insufficiency of the British and French effectives that had been landed, and beyond this, in the absence of any convention with the Germans and Bulgarians, of the fear of legitimate reprisals on their part against Greece for the use that the Allies had made of a part of Greece for military operations. In these circumstances the retention of the mobilized Greek army on the frontier might have some effect on the German-Bulgarian plans. Besides this the maintenance of the Greek mobilization had the great merit of effectively protecting Sarrail's flank, and the Entente did not hesitate to offer Greece advances to enable her to meet the cost of mobilization.

These serious considerations decided Athens provisionally to maintain the mobilization. On the other hand, it was unfortunately impossible to put off the elections indefinitely; the occasion was too grave, the country had at all costs to be consulted; the fathers and brothers of those who were mobilized were at home, and would suffice to give a true estimate of the national opinion. There was, moreover, no possibility of doubt; the name of M. Venizelos was execrated by nearly the whole country. As to the 265,000 soldiers, their non-participation in the voting could only be to the advantage of M. Venizelos; they were almost to a man ardent anti-Venizelists; they proved this when they were demobilized in July, 1916<sup>1</sup>; they were indignant against

<sup>1</sup> These men, as will be seen later, as soon as they returned to their homes in 1916, gave proofs of such violent anti-Venizelism that M. Venizelos became alarmed and advised the Entente to *hurry on* of the elections that it had been urging Greece to hold in the hope of strengthening his position.

M. Venizelos for his interventionist obsession ; they had but one desire, to return to their homes and their occupations, and but one fear, to be dragged into war.

M. Venizelos realized at once that the elections would mean the end of his imposture, and that the voters would wipe out his party, and so prevent him from further parading as champion of the wishes of the Greek nation, a title which he arrogated to himself abroad with the aid of the foreign Press. With the support of this same foreign Press he therefore denounced the elections as "anti-constitutional", under the pretext that the soldiers, all of whom were his partisans [*sic*], would not be able to participate in the voting ! And he shrewdly instructed his followers to abstain from these elections as " tainted by illegality " ! By this subterfuge he was able to continue to hold himself up to the foreigner as the sole spokesman of the Greek people !

#### IV

The shrewdness of M. Venizelos' tactics was uncontested : aided by the Paris Press and the foreign censorships he represented every abstentionist at the elections as a partisan of his policy.

According to the official statistics, however, of the two elections of 1915, the count on 19th December showed in comparison with that of 18th June a decrease of 80,000 votes, in other words of 11 per cent of the total number of voters in June. Even this difference is only partly due to intentional abstentions, attributable to the influence of M. Venizelos. There were other causes : members returned unopposed ; the severe weather and the difficulty of communication in parts of the country, where the candidates had no interest in bearing the expense of the journey for their supporters, etc. There were also the hindrances, for the greater part intentional, caused by the foreign troops that occupied part of Macedonia. In this matter General Sarrail vigorously supported M. Venizelos ; at Salonica he terrorized the electors and hindered them from voting. In the country districts the case was still worse ; the French soldiers openly barred the road to the voters, and in several

places they took military occupation of the polling rooms and smashed the ballot boxes ! All this, however, did not prevent the Paris papers, on the following days, from acclaiming the great pro-Venizelist and pro-Entente significance of the mass abstentions from the polling booths on the part of the voters at Salonica !

The clearest evidence that King Constantine was fully justified in considering that the Chamber of 13th June no longer represented the wishes of the people is furnished by the elections of 1st November, 1920. On that day the Deputies in this Chamber, which King Constantine dissolved quite regularly in 1915, but M. Venizelos succeeded in re-suscitating in 1917 (by a disgraceful violation of constitutional principles), were defeated *to the last man*, including M. Venizelos himself, whom the voters refused even to return as a plain member !

So much for the accusation brought against King Constantine and M. Skouloudis of having violated the Constitution and the wishes of the Greek people.

## V

M. Skouloudis had scarcely become Premier when the German-Bulgarian victory in Serbia was confirmed in an alarming manner. There was no possible doubt about it : Serbia was suffering the fate of Belgium, and the weak Allied contingents which had come tardily to her aid had to retire, as in Belgium, or be annihilated. Germany was already officially asking Athens : " What will you do if the Serbians and the Allies retire on Greek territory ? We have already tolerated many failures in your duty as neutrals ; our patience has its limits."

Herr Szilassy, Austrian Minister in Athens, declared to M. Skouloudis on 26th October/8th November that if Greece did not carry out the provisions of the Hague Convention in the event of the Serbs and the Allies taking refuge in her territory, the Central Powers would no longer keep to their promise to prevent the Bulgarians from crossing the Greek frontier. M. Skouloudis replied that the Central Powers must not forget that little Greece had not the power

to disarm or intern by force the armies of Great Powers. If the Bulgarians attempted to take advantage of this involuntary failure on Greece's part, and broke into Greek territory, they would immediately be attacked by the Greek army.<sup>1</sup>

Herr von Mirbach, the German Minister, made an identical announcement to M. Skouloudis on the same day. M. Skouloudis replied with the same firmness and added, in the most categorical manner, that "Greece would never tolerate the violation of her territory by the Bulgarians."<sup>2</sup> Both in substance and in form these steps of the Central Powers were in perfect accord with international law.

The Anglo-French contention was: "M. Venizelos, as head of the Greek Government, asked us to send our troops to Greece in order to aid Serbia; their presence is therefore justified." This argument was plausible but could not withstand a serious judicial examination. Apart from the infringement of the Greek Constitution (of which Britain and France called themselves guarantors) which M. Venizelos' action had brought about, it must be remembered that in October the Entente Powers had themselves agreed with King Constantine and M. Zaimis that they only asked of Greece a simple right of passage for their troops to land at Salonica and pass to the assistance of the Serbs, across the Greek frontiers. Greece entirely agreed to this concession. But obviously it would have been monstrous to demand that she should extend her goodwill towards the Entente, and the infringements of her duty as a neutral towards Germany, to the point of permitting the belligerents to entrench and fight on her neutral territory, devastating her towns, her villages and her countryside. This very reasonable apprehension led to the suggestion by certain members of the Skouloudis Cabinet and certain Athens papers that Greece, to save herself from the cruel fate of Belgium and Serbia, should henceforth keep strictly to the observation of international law, and prepare to apply the Hague Convention of 18th October, 1907, which directs the internment of belligerents who enter neutral territory,

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>2</sup> Greek Archives

should the British, French and Serbian armies withdraw into Greek territory.<sup>1</sup> By doing this Greece would deprive the victorious German and Bulgarian forces of any pretext for pursuing the defeated troops into her country. M. Skouloudis, however, did not venture to consider this step except as a distant possibility, for he saw that it would provoke extreme anger in Paris, in spite of its incontestable legality.

In his very first interview with M. Skouloudis, on 9th November, M. Guillemin pressed him to say what Greece would do in the event of the retreat of the Allied armies into Greek territory. M. Skouloudis wisely evaded a reply. When M. Guillemin pressed him further he answered to test him, "We should have to consider the application of the Hague regulations. . . ." M. Guillemin telegraphed at once to Paris, travestyng this statement, that M. Skouloudis had informed him that "We shall have to consider . . . etc." This false report sufficed to let loose a storm of fury in Paris. And this in spite of the fact that M. Skouloudis took care on the same day, in his telegram of 27th October/9th November to the Greek Minister in Paris, to inform M. Briand of the exact terms of his conversation with M. Guillemin, insisting on the employment he had made of the conditional, in face of a purely theoretical contingency. M. Skouloudis' reply thus gained disquieting proportions owing to M. Guillemin's action.

On 29th October/11th November M. Romanos telegraphed in reply to the telegram that he had received the previous evening from M. Skouloudis :—

. . . M. Briand has asked me to reply to Your Excellency that the French Government had no desire to consider such possibilities. It did not for an instant imagine that the rules of the Hague Convention could be applied to the British and French troops, but it considers that it would be no less serious a matter if Greece thought of applying them to the Serbians. M. Briand spoke most courteously to me, but at the same time very firmly . I gathered the impression that after

<sup>1</sup> During the war the Swiss and Dutch freely applied this article of the Hague Convention to belligerent detachments who entered their territories voluntarily or otherwise.

the great satisfaction with which M. Briand received your statements communicated yesterday to M. Cambon, the question dealt with to-day had greatly irritated him

On 30th October/12th November M. Guillemin read to M. Skouloudis a communication from his Government to the effect that before dreaming of applying the Hague Conventions Greece should consider the serious consequences that might result to herself.<sup>1</sup>

M. Briand's telegrams show that the mere mention of the Hague Conventions was enough to alarm him. It need not have done so : he forgot that the geographical situation of Greece prevented her from doing anything against the Powers who were mistresses of the seas.

On 31st October/13th November M. Skouloudis, disturbed at the inexact interpretation applied to his words, telegraphed to M. Romanos :—

I have the honour to inform you that the irritation produced in France by (our) examination of the possibility of the retreat of the Serbian army into Greek territory, does not appear to be justified, for the examination, whether by the Government or by the Press, is not inspired by any ill-will or unfriendliness. the Royal Government was bound to consider a possible even though improbable eventuality, and the more so because, in order to attain its sincere desire of avoiding every cause of difficulty or misunderstanding, it could not wait until the questions required immediate answer, it was desirable to consider them in the hope of preventing them from arising or, failing this, of preparing a friendly settlement to the best satisfaction of all the interests concerned. Taking the foregoing as a guide, you will be good enough to endeavour to calm by all possible means the undue alarm that has been aroused

SKOULLOUDIS

In a further telegram to Athens on 1st/14th November M. Romanos said that the irritation against Greece in certain quarters, and particularly in the Press, had increased, and he attributed the violent Press campaign against Greece to inspiration on the part of the French Government, which, seized with a sort of madness after its pro-Bulgarian

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives

adventure, was striving to prepare public opinion for every eventuality.

On 4th/17th November M. Skouloudis was visited in Athens by M. Denys Cochin, French Minister of State and a tried friend of Greece, to whom he explained with emotion the details of his conversation which had been so misinterpreted to Allied Ministers. He explained, among other matters, that he had felt that he might be doing a service to the retreating Serbians in more definitely affirming Greek neutrality, but that in view of the protests of the Entente Greece renounced all idea of invoking the Hague Convention. This renunciation, however, could not be publicly declared, for Greece, being officially neutral, was compelled to keep up the appearance of neutrality by the fear of giving the Central Powers a pretext for invading her territory. M. Skouloudis emphasized the fact that there was a great difference between an abstract allusion to the Hague regulations and their material application. "Consider," he added, "what we have already done to assist the landing of your troops at Salonica. We protested *as a matter of form*, but we have not ceased for an instant to furnish you with every facility, even to the detriment of the requirements of our own armies. I declare to you formally that should it happen that the armies of the Allies are obliged by misfortune to retreat on to our territory, *we should have no wish to disarm them even if we could.*"

M. Denys Cochin declared twice to M. Skouloudis that he considered his declarations to be perfectly satisfactory.<sup>1</sup>

On 5th/18th November Sir Francis Elliot, following the example of M. Guillemin, repeated to M. Skouloudis that the Entente was awaiting formal assurances from Greece for the security of its troops. In reply M. Skouloudis recapitulated all that Greece had already done for the Entente, and asked the British Minister how it could be possible, after such services, that the Entente should doubt her good faith. He also drew attention to the unfair campaign of the Allied Press against Greece. Sir Francis smilingly replied: "We are trying to inspire you with a little fear in order that you may the more easily give way!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Greek Archives.

M. Denys Cochin informed King Constantine on 6th/19th November that the Allies were studying two projects, one of which was the complete abandonment of the Balkan expedition, and the other the undertaking of a new expedition, with considerable forces, in a direction other than Serbia.<sup>1</sup> This was a significant declaration. Since the Allies themselves no more knew what they desired or what they could do in the Balkans, how could they ask that Greece, without arms, should plunge headlong into the conflict ?

It is desirable, finally, to take note of certain absurd episodes and certain dishonest intrigues that inflamed the situation at this time. M. Guillemin telegraphed to Paris requesting the dispatch of a squadron to the Piræus, for according to him the Greeks were considering the closing of some of their ports by mines. Isvolsky, on the strength of a communication from Cambon, reported this to Petrograd on 11th November.<sup>2</sup> M. Skouloudis had no difficulty in proving the absurdity of this fable. Considering the enormous extent of the Greek coast line, its defence by mines would have been a material impossibility. Apart from this, Greece was virtually without mines ; she had ordered some from France, and to reassure the Entente M. Skouloudis offered to dispense with the delivery of this order<sup>3</sup>

On 12th November Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd that the Quai d'Orsay was instructing M. Guillemin to demand of the Greek Government " guarantees for the security of the army in the East, *but taking care not to* define what it understood by the word guarantees "<sup>4</sup> M. J. Cambon explained to Isvolsky that this absurdity was due to negotiations being still in progress between the Allies !<sup>4</sup>

Demidov wrote to Petrograd on 12th November<sup>5</sup> —

We need no longer rely on the written guarantees of the Greek Government, the mere appearance of Allied squadrons in Greek waters will afford us the desired guarantee This is also the

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book, publ 1922

<sup>3</sup> Skouloudis' telegram to the Greek Legations in London, Paris, Rome, and Petrograd on 6th/19th November, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> Russian White Book, publ 1922.

<sup>5</sup> Russian White Book, publ 1922

opinion of a very high Greek personality, who has requested me, however, not to give his name in transmitting this communication to you.

In this way did M. Venizelos carry on his insidious work against his country.

Meanwhile a violent Press campaign was launched against Greece, and succeeded in raising French opinion especially to a white heat.

With reference to the possibility of the disarmament of the retreating Allies, the *Times* wrote on 15th November :—

One of the objects of the Entente Powers in drawing the sword has been to reinforce that old-fashioned respect for treaty obligations which is the basis of international good-will.

It was precisely the suggestion of that fact by M. Skouloudis that had provoked a tempest in Paris !

In Paris not only the Press, but M. Briand himself, was seized with panic at this moment. It was believed that the expeditionary force at Salonica was faced with imminent danger from Greece.

According to his speech in the secret sitting of the French Chamber, the instructions that M. Briand gave to the French Minister in Athens were<sup>1</sup> :—

The programme of action for our fleet was as follows : *to secure all the territory necessary for the construction of an entrenched camp, to disperse the Greek troops, to place the railways and roads at the disposal of the General Commanding the expeditionary force ; he should be free to take all steps necessary for security*. A fleet had been collected at Milo, not far from Athens, to support the action of our Minister, and the following were the instructions in case events should make extreme measures necessary. The action proposed by the French Government was as follows (telegram to our Minister in Athens, 13th November, 1915) In order of effectiveness : *destruction of the Greek fleet, bombardment of Salamis and of the Piraeus, threat to Athens, but avoiding injury to ancient monuments.*

The operations would in the first place be based on Suda and then Ægina.

<sup>1</sup> See *Journal Officiel*, 28th October, 1919 (Secret Sitting of 16th June, 1916), pp. 71 and 72.

Other operations that could be dispensed with were the military occupation of Milo and Syra, military occupation of Corfu, seizure of merchant vessels, blockade of the Gulf of Athens and of the Corinth canal

Happily there was no need for us to resort to these extreme measures An agreement was rapidly come to between our Ministers and the Greek Government It was agreed that our troops should occupy such territories as they required, and that they should be able to instal themselves there in perfect safety The Greek Government reserved the right to protest, we reserved the right to make no reply (Laughter )

It is impossible to read these lines without utter stupefaction. The crime with which Greece was so sharply reproached was that of having appealed to an article of international law ! And to teach Greece what it costs the weak to appeal to international law in opposition to the interests of the strong it was proposed if necessary to sink her little fleet, an armament rather for show than for war, and to bombard Athens and the Piræus, *in spite of the fact that Article 25 of the Fifth Hague Convention expressly prohibits the bombardment of open towns.*

On the evening of 19th November the British legation in Athens announced the commercial blockade of Greece. On the morning of 20th November, when they awoke, the Athenians learned that they only had a week's supply of corn and that the Entente would not allow another grain to enter Greece ! The impression gathered by the people was that the Entente, on the advice of M. Venizelos, intended to starve Greece out of her neutrality. Public opinion was incensed to the highest degree; and the indignation was accentuated by the fact that the Allies maintained complete silence for several days regarding the object of the blockade !

On 7th/20th November, in order to gain in Greece the ground that the Entente were losing by their diplomatic blunders, the German Minister in Athens was instructed to inform M. Skouloudis that his Government had learnt that the Entente was refusing Greece the promised loan of 40,000,000 francs, of which the Greek treasury was in urgent need, and that Germany was willing to lend Greece this sum. M. Skouloudis replied that before entering into any discussion

he desired to have the assurance that this offer was subject to no *political conditions*.<sup>1</sup> This reply from M. Skouloudis, made at the very moment when the Allies were depriving the Greek nation of bread, is proof of his unswerving loyalty to the Entente.

The Entente calculated that the critical condition of the Greek exchequer would force Greece to borrow from the Allies on whatever political conditions they chose to exact. This was another of the many indirect methods devised in Paris with the object of imposing Venizelos and the war upon Greece. On 22nd November Herr von Mirbach informed M. Skouloudis, on instruction from his Government, that Germany attached *no political condition* to her offer. M. Skouloudis had therefore no longer any reason for refusal ; and an advance of 40,000,000 marks was made. It was not until the morning of 23rd November that the Entente Ministers at last handed to M. Skouloudis the ultimatum—explanatory of the blockade—demanding the concessions mentioned above by M. Briand, and asking the Greek Government to reply as soon as possible. The ultimatum opened as follows :—

. . . An allusion having been officially made to the possibility of the disarmament or internment of such British, French or Serbian troops as might be forced, in the course of military operations, to pass from Serbian or Bulgarian territories on to Greek territory, the Governments of the Allies are compelled to demand of the Greek Government that it shall give them officially the formal assurance that Greek troops will in no circumstances attempt to disarm or intern Allied troops, but that, on the contrary, the policy of benevolent neutrality towards the Entente Powers, the promise of which has been confirmed on several occasions by the Greek Government, will be maintained with all its consequences

It will be noted that the ultimatum is based exclusively on the *allusion* of M. Skouloudis, in spite of the fact that the Greek Premier had from the outset vigorously insisted on the entirely platonic character of his allusion, and that he had even retracted it a hundred times in official conversations. Further on the ultimatum stated that the Entente

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives

had no intention to force Greece to depart from her neutrality . . . in spite of her treaty of alliance with Serbia ! These two arguments, the insincerity of which is now known, were sufficient to show the moral character of the ultimatum. On the evening of 24th November M. Skouloudis accepted in writing the demands of the Entente, and the British Minister at once telegraphed the order to raise the blockade. The following are the concessions which were demanded of Greece and agreed to by her, the details being left for later settlement :—

1 The withdrawal of Greek troops from the town of Salonica and its neighbourhood .

2 Free and complete disposal of the railways and roads as far as the frontier, with a view to defensive organization around Salonica .

3 Freedom of the sea, such as the right to inspect ships and small craft in Greek territorial waters and to search for and destroy enemy submarines and their supply bases on Greek coasts

This last clause gave rise in a short time to the most shocking abuses. As will be seen later from the evidence of Admiral Dartige du Fournet,<sup>1</sup> no trace of any submarine base was ever discovered on any part of the Greek coast. But France had a number of adventurers in her service who, in order to justify their lucrative posts, pretended that they saw German submarine bases all over Greece. Many Venizelists also joined in this campaign of information against their own country, in order to serve their party.

Scarcely had Greece recovered from her legitimate grief at this unjust treatment when a new and serious cause of anxiety overtook her. What would be the attitude of the Germans and Bulgars who were advancing victoriously through Macedonia when they learned that neutral Greece was allowing their enemies to entrench against them on her territory ? It is a fact that the Entente had been counting on this circumstance to provoke an automatic rupture between Germany and Greece. German diplomacy, however, the

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet: *Souvenirs de guerre d'un amiral*. Plon-Nourrit, Paris This work, which appeared in 1920, was very quickly sold out ; the agents of the Venizelist Government resorted to large purchases through the booksellers in order to prevent this sensational evidence from reaching the public

blunders of which during the war will remain legendary, was not caught in the snare ; on the contrary it showed great perspicacity : it declared that it provisionally accepted the new situation in Greece as a case of *force majeure, independent of the wishes of Greece*. Greece was thus saved from a great catastrophe. It is possible, however, to form an opinion of the incoherence of Allied policy towards Greece from the following fact : On 6th December the British Military Attaché, Lieut.-Col. Cunningham, told General Moschopoulos, the military Governor of Salonica, that "the Greek army is saving and assuring the security of the flanks and rear of the Allies", who did not intend that a single Greek soldier should be removed from Macedonia.<sup>1</sup>

## VI

On 29th November M. Skouloudis read to the assembled Ministers of the Allies a statement in which Greece declared her desire to leave to the respective military authorities in Macedonia the task of *determining the method by which the demands formulated* in the ultimatum of 28th November *were to be carried out.*<sup>2</sup> One after another the Ministers of the Entente Powers searched for means of quarrelling with this statement. Keenest of all was Sir. F. Elliot, who complained that no allusion had been made to Article 3 of the Allied note (liberty of action in Greek territorial waters and on the Greek coast). M. Guillemin lost no time in adding with emphasis that this Article was of the greatest interest to the Entente, "for the Greeks must not be always lamenting that their sovereignty and independence are being violated ! . . ." M. Skouloudis, irritated at the coolness of this, replied that for nearly a year past the Entente had been making a practice of violations amounting virtually to hostile action. "We submit to these violations of our rights," he said, "without protest, trying to persuade ourselves that it is a case of an unavoidable evil. Do not ask us, however, to sign with our own hand the abdication of our rights."

<sup>1</sup> Et. Skouloudis : *Sinossis*, p 46. Athens, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Greek Archives.

And M. Skouloudis gave a long list of violations committed during the past year in Greek territorial waters against Greek ships, and, still more serious, on Greek territory against the property of Greek subjects. He ended by expressing indignation at the incursion that had taken place at Argos, a town seven miles inland from the sea, when some sailors bearing no marks of identification <sup>1</sup> had arrived furtively by night and had burnt 480 cases of pitch belonging to the Greek Government and intended for the destruction of locusts ! They claimed to have found a base . . . for submarines !

This was one of the first of a long series of irritating and unintelligent acts of aggression that the representatives of the Allies committed in Greece.

Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd <sup>2</sup> on 1st December that the London Cabinet considered the Greek reply to be perfectly satisfactory, but that the Paris Cabinet were of a different opinion, and J. Cambon informed Isvolsky that in Paris it had been definitely decided to take forcible measures against Greece.

On 9th December <sup>3</sup> the four Entente Ministers visited M. Skouloudis, and Sir Francis Elliot read, in a severe tone, the following collective telegram addressed by the Governments of the Allies to their Ministers in Athens :—

The Powers cannot waste further time in discussion and negotiation with the Greek Government or authorities. They consider that the declarations that the King of Greece has made to you—your telegram No. —may serve as the basis of an immediate agreement that should satisfy Greek scruples and secure the protection of our interests . . .

There followed a recapitulation of the declarations of King Constantine to M. Guillemin regarding the concessions that he agreed to make to the Allies in Macedonia. M. Skouloudis, struck by several inexactitudes in the text reproducing the King's declarations, asked for a copy.

<sup>1</sup> They had removed the name of their ship from their caps, but had been recognized as British from articles that they had forgotten to take away with them.

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book, publ. 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Greek Archives

M. Guillemin replied that he could not comply with this request as the instructions to the Allied Ministers were definite : they were to read the note to M. Skouloudis, but not to leave a copy. M. Skouloudis then took from his portfolio a copy of the King's declarations to M. Guillemin, sent to the King by M. Guillemin himself, and the discrepancies between the two texts became evident. The Allied Ministers, clearly embarrassed, did not persist ; on the contrary, they became very conciliatory and the following arrangement was easily arrived at<sup>1</sup> —

1 Salonica shall not be entirely evacuated The Greek division there shall continue to remain there ,

2 Should the railway staff prove insufficient, Greece shall augment it to such extent as shall ensure the maximum efficiency, but in no case shall she engage foreign employees ,

3 Greece shall not oppose with force either defensive works or the occupation of points of defence, but she shall make most energetic and serious protest, and not merely for the sake of formality ;

4 Should the Allied troops draw the war on to Greek territory, the Greek armies shall retire and leave the field free to the two parties to fight it out ,

5 Greece shall not admit any discussion on the subject of Karaburnu, after the King has given his word that he will never make use of this fortress or of batteries placed in it against the Allied forces

The Allied Ministers expressed their satisfaction, and did so even more strongly on learning that the Government had already ordered the 5th Army Corps to move to the East so as to free Salónica. The Ministers of Britain and France stated that this measure constituted a *great* concession on the part of Greece, and they promised that every difficulty should disappear between Greece and the Allies when, in two or three days' time, the military authorities had worked out on the spot the agreement arrived at. And M. Guillemin at once recalled the declaration of his Government that it would be happy to satisfy the financial and commercial demands of Greece.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Skouloudis' telegram to the Greek Legations of 27th November/10th December, 1915

<sup>2</sup> Skouloudis' telegram to the Greek Legations of 27th November/10th December, 1915.

M. Skouloudis then took the opportunity to say to the Ministers of the Entente<sup>1</sup>.—

“ There then, Gentlemen, you have certain proof of our loyalty. Never, at any moment, have we dreamt of lifting a finger against the troops of the Allies. We have rigorously maintained towards you a state of the most benevolent neutrality. We have accorded you every assistance compatible with our sovereign rights properly so called, and the vital needs of our army. Unhappily, you have not appreciated the true import of this, and, a still more serious matter, you have more than once committed acts of violation against us that nothing could possibly justify or excuse. It is the first time in history that four great nations, the most powerful on earth, have so acted against a small neutral State ! ”

In reply to this M. Guillemin alleged that these measures had but one object in the minds of the Powers : namely, to prove to Germany that Greece only tolerated the armies of the Allies because of the military pressure of the Entente, and thereby to dissuade Germany from pursuing the Allied armies on to Greek territory !

To this M. Skouloudis replied :—

We have never asked you to defend our territory in this manner and the Central Powers are not so naive as to be taken in by any such trickery , more than once they have informed us that if we allowed you to form a base at Salonica, they would demand of us in compensation a similar concession at some other point on our soil In conclusion, you have committed all these acts against us, all these inexcusable measures, and for what purpose ? For the very arrangement that I proposed to you a month ago You have lost four weeks for nothing<sup>2</sup>

This happy lessening of the tension did not, however, last long. General Sarrail was watching. On 15th December M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Legations in London, Paris, Rome and Petrograd :—

The Ministers of the Entente have presented another Note to me protesting energetically against obstacles placed by the Greek

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives

<sup>2</sup> Greek Archives

authorities in the way of the execution of the promises of H M the King, and also against the violation of the engagements entered into by the Greek Government towards the four Great Powers I have refused with indignation to accept this Note, considering it an insult to Greece, who, even in face of the four Great Powers, has a care for her own dignity and independence The note is indeed insulting because it repeats accusations the baselessness of which has been completely demonstrated by means of a series of verbal and written communications Please call at once on the Minister of Foreign Affairs and express to him in plain language my great indignation at this move, which the Greek Government is convinced can only be due to false and incomplete information being sent to the Powers by certain of their representatives, who, in their zeal, appear to do everything they can to poison relations that Greece has always desired should be cordial

What had happened ? The turbulent General Sarrail had made one of those moves by means of which, during his command, he had inflamed at will the situation in the East. He had telegraphed to M. Briand : (1) That the Greeks were preventing him from making use of the telegraph ; (2) that they had withdrawn from the central depot 70 wagons, of which the Allied army had great need ; (3) that they had prohibited a Serbian engine from running on the Greek permanent way ; (4) that the Greeks were disarming Serbian soldiers who had fled into Greek territory, in flagrant violation of the formal undertakings entered into by Greece in this respect. And, in fact, that in general the Greek authorities were showing much ill-will towards the Allies.

When, on 15th December, the Ministers of the Allies went in a body, with M. Guillemin at their head, to present this Note to M. Skouloudis—this Note in which Greece was accused of bad faith—M. Skouloudis, in a firm but courteous tone, replied with severe precision point by point<sup>1</sup> :—

1 General Sarrail had demanded the use of the telegraph lines specially reserved for the railway service between Salonica and the frontier. He was told that the safety of the trains would thereby be seriously compromised. The General then agreed that he would only make use of them outside working hours Soon after, however, he

<sup>1</sup> Greek Archives.

secretly placed connexions at the two extremities of the wire, and broke his engagement. The Greeks, in order to avoid serious accidents, resumed the use of the confiscated line during working hours, at this General Sarrail became furious. And that in spite of the fact that the Greek authorities had allowed General Sarrail to add a wire of his own on the Greek telegraph posts, and that instead of one the General had fixed a whole set.

Is that, demanded M. Skouloudis, what you call an obstacle to your telegraphic communications?

2 As to the 70 wagons—it was really only a matter of 50—they were removed because they belonged to the victualling service of the 5th Greek Army Corps, which had been transferred east of the Struma at the desire of the Allies themselves.

M. Guillemin objected that before making use of these wagons the Greek authorities should have obtained authority from General Sarrail, one of whose divisions had been in danger of running short of provisions. M. Skouloudis replied sharply: “But we too must secure provisions for our 5th corps. I fear your Excellency overlooks the fact that you are in our country here, in our home, that the railway is ours, as also is the railway stock, and that we are under no obligation to seek permission from anyone for the victualling of our soldiers. You complain of the 50 wagons appropriated to our soldiers, but you forget that there remain at your disposal all the rest of our material, more than 400 wagons!”

3 As regards the Serbian engine, the refusal to allow this to run was in conformity with the agreement arrived at, which prohibited the employment of other than Greek nationals on the Greek lines.

4 As regards the Serbian soldiers who were disarmed, these were only isolated groups of soldiers, disbanded or irregulars, who had arrived at the Greek frontier separated from their units. The Greek authorities had considered it prudent to disarm them provisionally, as a measure of public safety. The Greek authorities have never caused the least difficulty to regular Serbian troops, or to those who were with their officers.

“That, gentlemen,” said M. Skouloudis. “is all that your grievances come to—the grievances which led M. Briand to speak so brusquely to M. Romanos, and yourselves to dispatch to Greece such a Note as she has never before received.”

from friendly Powers. And so I refuse to accept your Note : and add that, for some time, we have not understood your conduct towards us. After all, what has this country done, that you should think it right, for many months, to have recourse to so many violations of her neutrality on her own ground, in her territorial waters, and against the property of her subjects abroad ? I had hoped at least that after our recent agreement, the era of pretexts and of subterfuges would have ended. I am sorry that the three Great Powers, who have rendered such services to the creation of this Kingdom, should so far have forgotten the respect which they owe to the honour and the independence of a free State, however small."

These firm and dignified words, from a man of eighty asking only justice for his country, visibly disturbed some of the Allied Ministers. First the Italian and then the Russian Minister strove to minimise the effect of the step which they had taken.

## VII

The *Times* (17th November, 1915) said :—

The Allies are upon Greek soil by Greek invitation That at once alters the whole nature of the neutrality which Greece has chosen to adopt It is unlike any other neutrality It is a neutrality *sur generis*, to which the ordinary provisions of international law as to the rights and duties of neutrals cannot apply without material modifications

Even if it be admitted that the step taken by M. Venizelos on 23rd September was legal, it is still true that the party violating international law could not set itself up to decree "material modifications" in that law at its own good pleasure and at its victim's expense. It was perfectly well understood at the time in London as well as in Paris that the standpoint from which the ultimatum of 23rd November was addressed to Greece was one of glaring illegality. A more plausible legal pretext was sought, therefore, the better to justify their interference (instigated by MM. Politis and Venizelos) with Hellenic sovereignty. To this end a novel judicial theory was improvised, and was embellished with

sundry quibbles, worthy of a shyster lawyer, and supposed to clothe it in legal vesture. This theory provided the desired Pharisaical formula, which allowed the violation and calumny of Greece: the while it pretended to the strictest observance of treaties!

From an article in the *Temps*, with which M Tardieu himself is to be credited, we reproduce an exposition of this theory.<sup>1</sup>

The French and the English landed at Salonica in virtue of a right duly established. They could have done the like at any other point of the Kingdom whose existence, independence and constitution they had guaranteed. The intervention of the Protecting Powers on Greek soil had been foreseen in the *additum* to the Treaty of London in 1827. The second Treaty of London, in February, 1830, envisaged the measures which France, England, and Russia should be able justly to undertake in order to ensure that the agreement concluded should be put into force and respected. Article 8 stipulates that "no forces belonging to one of the three Contracting Powers may enter the territory of the new Greek State without the assent of the other two Parties." It follows that they are the sole judges of the occasion for such action.

When Greece, weary of the too Germanic rule of Otto of Bavaria, deposed her king in 1862, the Protecting Powers intervened on the ground of their common guarantee, to smooth over the difficulties and to fulfil the prayers of the Greek nation by calling Prince William of Denmark to the throne of Greece. The Treaty of London (1863) declares, in Article 3, that 'Greece, under the sovereign rule of Prince William of Denmark (George I) and the guarantee of the three Courts, is an independent constitutional monarchy.'

King Constantine is governing by dissolving Parliament in the teeth of Greek opinion [*sic*]. The constitution is paralyzed by an oligarchy. The allies of the Turks are threatening the country whose independence and constitutional Government the Triple Entente have guaranteed.

The subject is a wide one, but can be treated succinctly. The web of sophisries is easily refuted.

(1) In the first place, the Treaty of July, 1827, entitled "A Treaty of Pacification", was essentially preliminary and provisional. It was worked out in view of special circumstances, all confined to 1827. It was aimed (*a*) to check

<sup>1</sup> *Temps*, 18th November, 1915

bloodshed between insurgent Greece and Turkey by establishing an armistice, (b) to ensure the concession by the Sublime Porte of local autonomy to certain Greek provinces (to be determined later) under the suzerainty of the Sultan. Military intervention was ~~envisaged~~ in the *addendum* to this Treaty only with a view to imposing the armistice and autonomy on the warring parties.

When, a little after the armistice, the Greek State was established, and the further treaties had made it no longer an autonomous vassal of the Sultan, but a sovereign independent State, it is obvious that the end pursued by the Treaty had been not only attained, but even surpassed ; and that therefore the Treaty ceased to exist. To invoke it, then, a century later, to justify interference with Greek internal affairs, is certainly a curious way of acting, if no more.

Further, the Treaty was carefully drawn up to leave no doubt as to the end pursued. Article 5 declares formally “The Contracting Powers will not look to these agreements for any extension of territory, exclusive influence, or commercial advantages for their subjects, other than those open to all other nations.” Even, then, if we admit that this treaty can be recalled to life, how can the ban on “exclusive influence” be reconciled with the occupation, since 1915, of Greek soil by France and by Britain and their exploitation of Greece’s geographical position for their own strategical and political purposes ?

(2) Only in 1830, after many mutual fallings out, after the battle of Navarino and a Russo-Turkish war, did the three Powers finally decide on the creation of an independent Greek State.

The protocol of London, 3rd February, 1830, signed by the plenipotentiary envoys of France, Russia, and England, and accepted by the Porte and by Greece, is the first official recognition of Greek independence and of the territorial limits of Greece. In Article 1 this independence is stipulated as “complete” :—

*Article 1.* Greece shall be an independent State, and shall enjoy all the rights, political, administrative, and commercial, which pertain to complete independence

*Article 8* Each of the three Courts shall preserve the right, assured to it by Article 6 of the Treaty of 6th July, 1827, to guarantee the whole of the above arrangements and clauses Any Charters of Guarantee shall be separately set forth

No forces belonging to one of the three Powers can enter the territory of the new Greek State without the consent of the other two Courts signing the Treaty

The first part of Article 8 implies no right of interference. The second aimed at the prevention of all interference with Greece by one or more of the contracting Powers, in the event of a general attack by Turkey on Greece ; in which case the clauses relating to the ~~guarantee~~ by the three Powers would apply. For this guarantee was worked out exclusively against Turkey.

In 1915 France and Britain made a military intervention in Greece, not to defend her against a Turkish threat to her integrity, but to further their military interests against Germany. The abuse is obvious. What makes it worse is that one of the co-signatories, Russia, formally disapproved in 1917 of French and British interference in Greek domestic concerns. France and Britain are thus found to have infringed flatly Article 8 of the protocol of 3rd February, 1830.

Finally, as to the validity of these treaties at the present day, all doubt is removed by the agreement between the Porte, France, Great Britain and Russia, and signed 9th July, 1832. The conclusion is as follows :—

The undersigned plenipotentiaries of the three Courts and those of the Sublime Porte have concluded the conferences held with a view to fixing, once and for all, the definite boundaries of Greece, as described above. and they recognize that, regarding the arrangements entered into by common consent in the present treaty, the purpose of the Treaty of London, 6th July, 1827, and of the protocols attached to it at various dates, has been completely attained, that the long negotiations which these stipulations have occasioned, are closed in such sort that they can never be re-opened finally, that the Greek question is irrevocably settled

The effect of this passage is solemnly to proclaim that, as the treaties concluded up to 3rd February, 1830, had

completely realized their purpose, all discussion of them is for ever closed. From that date on, then, the treaties cease to exist : their interest is purely historical. Only the frenzy produced by the Great War could drive the Governments in Paris and London to exhume these dead and long forgotten treaties, in order to legalize in the eyes of the world the cruel injustices and wrongs inflicted on a Greece loyally neutral.

(3) By Article 1 of the Decree, dated 30th March, 1863, of the Greek National Assembly, the Danish Prince was proclaimed "constitutional monarch" of the Greeks, under the name of George I, King of the Hellenes. On 13th July, 1863, a treaty was concluded in London between the three Powers and Denmark, relating to the accession of Prince William. Its most important provisions are those contained in Articles 3 and 5. The first renews, in the same terms, the guarantee given in 1832 : "Greece, under the sovereignty of Prince William of Denmark and the guarantee of the three Powers, is an independent monarchy." It adds, however, the word "constitutional". As to the meaning of the "guarantee", it is expressly laid down in Protocol No. 4, 26th June, 1863 : "As regards the guarantee of the political existence of the Kingdom, the Protecting Powers hold to the terms enunciated in the Convention of 7th May, 1832."

The insertion in Article 3 of the word "constitutional" was made only in deference to the above-cited resolution of the Greek National Assembly. It was merely a courteous formula ; for at that time it had never occurred to the three Powers to trouble themselves about the form of the Greek monarchy. At no time did they intervene, directly or indirectly, in the drawing up of the charter of the Greek Constitution, or in the subsequent modifications made in it from time to time.

(4) The three epithets which the contracting Powers were careful to insert in the documents which they signed, were "independent", "monarchical", and "constitutional". These are in natural agreement ; they are not mutually exclusive. Otherwise the formula worked out would be without meaning. Besides, these epithets can only refer

together to the Greek political State if their end is to provide a guarantee against foreign attack. Against a foreign attack only can be guaranteed at once independence, the form of government, and the political regime of a State.

Strictly, independence or sovereignty admits of no restriction and a guarantee of the form of government or of the political regime of Greece, against Greece herself, is nonsensical. A country is independent of everyone, both as a whole and in each of its elements.

Finally, nothing could better convince the reader of the dishonesty with which the word "guarantee" was interpreted during the Great War than the utterances of the French politicians contemporary with the emergence of Greece and authors of the very passages cited above from the treaties. The Duc de Broglie, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a speech made to the Senate on 18th May, 1833, after tracing the history of the three Powers' diplomatic action in the Greek question, drew the following picture of the free Greece which the so-called Protecting Powers envisaged on the morrow of their guarantees of its independence :—

On the part of France there was a sincere and enlightened desire crowned with success, not only to deliver Greece from the Ottoman yoke, but to make Greece a true State, an independent State both in law and in fact, a State under no one's tutelage, a State in no need of constant officious *intervention* a State, in brief, free to choose its friends and its alliances, and in consequence disposed constantly to look toward that Power which had made it such—toward France, who can promise it her assistance at need, *without threatening it for ever with her protection*.

That result has been attained with complete success. Greece exists and is independent. All Europe recognizes her, she is dependent on no Power either as suzerain or guarantor.

For more than eighty years, without exception, the relations between Greece and the guaranteeing Powers were governed precisely by this conception. Throughout this long period, ending in 1915, the Powers carefully abstained from putting forward the least claim at the expense of Greek sovereignty. It needed the world war,

with its universal perversion and corruption, for Paris and London to adopt an interpretation of the guarantee which would have shamed Tartuffe himself !

(5) As regards the King's person, the Treaties contain no formal guarantee : but as they guarantee the independence of Greece they necessarily give an implicit guarantee, even against foreign attack, that she shall be entirely free not only to assent to, but equally to keep or to dethrone her sovereign. That Greece assented to the Prince proposed in 1863 by the guaranteeing Powers, in no way implies that the Greek State divested itself of its natural right to have what prince it pleased , or that France, Britain and Russia can, against Greek will, dethrone a King of Greece who for some reason no longer suits them.

(6) When France and Britain went to Athens to restore the constitutional regime alleged to have been violated by King Constantine, did they themselves respect the Constitution which they claimed to be protecting ? It is only too easy to prove that, if anyone violated at once the letter and the spirit of the Greek Constitution, it was the "guaranteeing" Powers, in concert with M. Venizelos. The facts are that (1) In landing at Salonica without the authorization of a preliminary law passed by the Greek Chamber, the "guaranteeing" Powers knowingly violated Article 99 of the Constitution. (2) In installing at Athens in 1916 a private Anglo-French police force, which conducted arbitrary investigations in the homes of Greek citizens, the two Powers violated Article 12 of the Constitution which they claimed to guarantee. (3) By their control of Posts and Telegraphs, imposed by the two Powers on the Greek Government from 1916, they broke Article 20 of the Constitution, according to which "the privacy of letters is absolutely inviolable." (4) In exacting from the Greek Government in 1916 the arbitrary dissolution of the Reservist Leagues (electoral organizations opposed to Venizelos), the "guaranteeing" Powers provoked the violation of Article 11 of the Constitution, which is as follows : " Only by an order of the Courts can an association be dissolved for breaking the provisions of the law." (5) By the expulsion, imprisonment or internment of the opponents

of their Greek servitor, the "guaranteeing" Powers, with his connivance, violated the following articles of the Constitution : Article 7, according to which "no penalty is inflicted which has not been previously determined by the law," and Article 8, by which "no one is without his consent withdrawn from his natural judges" Foreign generals and admirals and M. Jonnart were the judges who, on Greek soil, judged and condemned Greek citizens to penalties, and for "crimes" not provided for in the penal code of the country. According to Article 95 of the Constitution, their natural judges should have been the members of a jury. (6) By a decree suspending the irremovability of the Judges, M. Venizelos, with the connivance of the "guaranteeing" Powers, violated Article 88 of the Constitution. (7) In forcing King Constantine to designate his successor, the

"Powers violated the Constitution by causing him to arrogate to himself a right which he does not possess. The Greek Constitution, which makes minute provisions for all circumstances of succession to the throne, does not confer on the King the right of nominating his successor himself. M. Jonnart, then, in forcing King Constantine to designate Prince Alexander as his successor, caused him to violate Article 44 of the Constitution. This involuntary violation of the Constitution of the kingdom was King Constantine's first and only one. (8) Finally, in the name of the Powers "guaranteeing" the constitutional liberties of the Greek people, M. Jonnart (who had become the von Bissing of Greece) exacted from Alexander—at the instigation of M. Venizelos—the convocation of the Chamber which had been dissolved two years before, in strict conformity with Article 37 of the Constitution, and replaced by another. That was an unheard of blow against the liberties of the Greek people, without precedent in the constitutional history of the world ! If a Parliament is dissolved, it is always to call upon the people to elect another, the actual expression of their sovereign will : never to recall to life a Parliament dissolved several years before ! This last incident laid bare the hypocrisy of the French theory that "constitutional truth" was being re-established in Greece.

## VIII

About the middle of November, 1915, Greece was visited by two distinguished representatives of the Allies : M. Denys Cochin, a French Minister of State and a well-known Philhellene, and Lord Kitchener, British Minister for War.

M Denys Cochin—he has been mentioned already above—came to make a personal ~~in~~<sup>visit</sup> of the diplomatic and military situation in Greece and to employ all the force of his moral ascendancy over Greek opinion to bring the Kingdom to abandon neutrality. King Constantine gave the French Minister the heartiest welcome, and energetically protested against the pro-German reputation given him.

“ I am not a German,” he said, “ I am not even a Dane. I am Greek and nothing but Greek ; I have no other care but for the interests of my people, and I wish to spare them, as far as possible, the evils of war. That is the whole secret of my policy.”

Unfortunately, the visit of M. Denys Cochin coincided with the ultimatum of 23rd November. M. Cochin’s position was a curious one. His goodwill and his promises had been riddled by the savage blockade which his country had just inflicted on Greece. He was a fair-minded man ; and he saw immediately that it would have been madness to hurl Greece into war at such a moment. When, on 22nd November, he returned to Athens from Salonica, and when M. Skouloudis expressed his surprise and pain at seeing Greece blockaded and the island of Melos brutally seized by the Allied fleet (despite the formal assurances which Skouloudis had just given both to him and to Lord Kitchener), M. Cochin replied without hesitation that he did not approve of the violent measures taken against Greece, and that he was going to telegraph his views to Paris. He added that as Serbian resistance was already broken, a French army at Salonica would henceforth be useless. He recommended an understanding with Greece in view of the French army’s departure from Macedonia. On his way back from Greece to France, M. Cochin gave an interview at Messina to the *Daily Mail*. He emphatically declared, with all the authority of his

commission, that the suspicions of King Constantine were founded only on Greek internal quarrels.<sup>1</sup>

The visit of Lord Kitchener, British Minister for War, was dictated by Britain's need to prepare for the evacuation of the Dardanelles. On 20th November, accompanied by Sir F. Elliott, he was received by M. Skouloudis.<sup>2</sup> He began by declaring that the Entente Powers had no intention of constraining Greece to abandon neutrality, but that they demanded guarantees for the security of their troops, inasmuch as certain recent declarations had aroused anxiety.

M. Skouloudis replied that Greek concentration at Salonica had been suspended for three days; that he thought the suspicions of the Allies as unjust as they were painful; and that before an attitude so obviously hostile as the Entente's Greece would find herself compelled, under protest, to withdraw all her troops from Macedonia, or even to demobilize her army, and to leave the Allies wholly responsible for the consequences.

Lord Kitchener was obviously disturbed by the last phrase. He immediately changed his tone: he strongly advised against demobilization. He told M. Skouloudis that after his interview with King Constantine, who had given him his word as a soldier, he had not the slightest apprehensions as to the security of the Allied forces in Greece.

M. Skouloudis took the opportunity to complain of the campaign against Greece in the British Press, and of the very insulting attitude of certain British officials. "For instance," he said, "only yesterday your Minister, here present, replied to my most formal assurances that my word was not good enough. When, exasperated by your suspicion, we ask the Entente to say what it wants of us, your representatives make no answer!"

Lord Kitchener was embarrassed, and tried to soothe M. Skouloudis by saying that the grievances of the British Press and officials arose solely from the *local* difficulties of the Allied armies. Lord Kitchener repeated twice that "we have no complaint against Greece".

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, 29th November, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> What follows is taken from the record of the conversation in the Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

M. Skouloudis made haste to take a note of it : he stressed, with satisfaction, the high authority of the person by whom these declarations were made.

But I cannot conceal from you (continued Lord Kitchener) the painful impression created in England by Greece's failure to take part in the expedition sent to the relief of Serbia. From the moment when you invited us to Salonica for that purpose, we all believed that you would be at our side. I was myself, at first, hostile to this expedition, but when your invitation, which France had made haste to accept, was read to me in the Cabinet, I did not wish to leave the French alone, and I believed that Greece had agreed to everything that was going on, so I joined in<sup>1</sup>.

As Lord Kitchener was stressing the invitation of Greece, M. Skouloudis answered that not only had he found no trace of any such invitation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not only had the King never consented to such a step, but besides, M. Venizelos himself had officially declared in the Chamber that he had never invited the Allies to Salonica. "Consequently," concluded M. Skouloudis, "it is not true that Greece has invited the Allies."

As Sir Francis Elliot seemed inclined to throw doubt on the declaration of M. Venizelos in the Chamber, M. Skouloudis interrupted him by offering to send him immediately the verbatim report of the session. Lord Kitchener, very puzzled, and obviously disconcerted, said, after a moment's silence, "Is it possible that two Great Powers should throw themselves into such an enterprise without being certain that they had been invited to it ? How could they know that the word of the Greek Prime Minister carried no authority ? If Mr. Asquith, for instance, were to make a statement of policy, no one would think of doubting that England would carry it out."

"Yes," said M. Skouloudis, "because when Mr. Asquith makes a statement everyone knows that he is speaking after consultation with all the elements concerned under the Constitution. That is why his statement binds the nation. But if M. Venizelos invited you, as you say and as I believe

<sup>1</sup> This and other quotations here made of Lord Kitchener's words are, of course, given in retranslation.

he did, despite his vehement denials since, he did so without consulting any of the constitutional elements of the country. Neither Crown nor Chamber nor Cabinet had any knowledge of his step. Consequently, allow me to repeat that Greece never invited you."

## IX

At Salonica it remained for Greece and the Allies to settle a great number of details relating to the ultimatum of 23rd November. It was necessary to come to an understanding as to the use of the Greek railways and telegraphs, of the roads, as to the feeding of the inhabitants and of the Greek soldiers, as to the disposition of the Greek army, and so on. General Sarrail had to discuss these details with delegates from the Greek general staff.

In the course of these negotiations, General Sarrail showed unheard of despotism. He took little heed of the limits laid down by the ultimatum which Greece had just accepted. He obeyed only his emotional frame of mind, he was irascible as only a soldier can be ; he insisted on seeing nothing but traps about him ! He treated as "spies" the most distinguished Greek officials. He thought fit to commandeer, in Greece, houses, offices, shops, vehicles and beasts of burden, without considering the requirements of the Greek mobilization or the primordial needs of the inhabitants of a country friendly but neutral, on whose soil he had encamped in contempt of the Fifth Hague Convention.

Greece rightly protested against these abuses. She pointed out the poverty of her resources ; and as the Allies continually declared that they had abundance of everything Athens remarked that they had only to bring from home all they needed.

It was the same with the railways. The Macedonian lines were very inadequately provided with rolling stock. Nevertheless, General Sarrail considered that almost the whole of this supply should have been put at his disposal ; for him every Greek objection, however well-founded, was due to "German gold". The same claims were made regarding coal. He thought he had the right to lay hands on the meagre

stock of Greece, imported with great difficulty from England or America.

General Sarrail also thought fit to commandeer Greek hospitals for his own needs. Finally, as if in conquered territory, he began to requisition provisions and fodder in a country which produced too little of both and had to import them. And for several months the importation of these commodities into Greece had been strictly rationed by the Allies themselves !

Greek opinion had been irritated already : now a still livelier resentment was felt. At this time, too, the Germans and Bulgarians were overrunning Serbia, and were already threatening Greek territory, under pretext of expelling Sarrail.

In face of Britain's continual hesitations, and of the evidence of French opposition to the Salonica expedition, Greece hoped to free herself from a grave difficulty, and the Allies themselves from an embarrassing position, by offering them, in case they decided to re-embark, the protection of the Greek army against a German-Bulgarian pursuit. The jingo press in Paris, and M. Briand himself, described this quite friendly offer as impudent insult. It was made the occasion for fresh invectives against Greece. Yet, as we saw above, M. Denys Cochin, the French Minister of State, was the first to make a suggestion to this effect to M. Skouloudis, and on 10th December the British military attaché at Athens officially asked for Greek intervention to the same effect.<sup>1</sup>

## X

On 7th December, 1915, the *Times* published an interview of its special correspondent at Athens with King Constantine. The King first reproached the Entente for its policy of friendship with Bulgaria, the cause of all the past misunderstandings between Greece and the Allies, and protested vehemently, giving chapter and verse, that Greek benevolent neutrality was sincere. Coming to the events of the day, he concluded, "Before we bind ourselves indissolubly to an

irrevocable programme, we want to know what is the Balkan programme of the Allies themselves. We are told that the Allies are considering the matter, that they have as yet no fixed programme. Under such conditions, can Greece fairly be pressed to take measures of the greatest political and strategical importance ? ”

On 8th December General Munro, commanding the British forces at Salonica, informed Sarrail—we have it on the word of the latter<sup>1</sup>—that his Government had decided to evacuate Salonica. For several days the British landing was actually suspended.

Finally—to prove how right King Constantine was in desiring to know the Allies’ Balkan programme before binding himself irrevocably to them—we have the following letter, addressed by M. N. Politis, permanent under-secretary to the Greek Foreign Office, to M. Skouloudis, Prime Minister, on 27th November/10th December :—

This morning I was visited at the Ministry by the British military attaché, Lieut-Col Cunningham. In the name of the British Minister he asked me if it was true that Germany would no longer respect the neutrality of Greek soil if the Allies would not leave Salonica.

I answered that Germany had let it be understood that she did not consider Greek soil to be any longer neutral if the Allies were going to entrench themselves at Salonica.

The British military attaché then spoke of Macedonia. He said that the situation of the Allied armies there was tragical. The Salonica expedition had miscarried and was henceforth useless, the British were recommending the definite abandonment of Salonica by the Allied forces, and if the French seemed to think otherwise that was due solely to reasons of French internal policy. Both were going to recall their forces within a month, and in the meantime French opinion ought to be prepared for it. He asked me whether, to avoid disaster to the Allied armies and to Greece, we could obtain from Germany a promise not to invade Greek territory by expressing our belief that the Allies were not going to stay in Salonica.

I told him how difficult it was for us to take any such step on the basis of “our belief”. It is obvious that Germany will not think

<sup>1</sup> See Sarrail, op. cit., p. 49

that enough. The only way to convince Germany is a declaration by the Allies themselves. Mr Cunningham replied that Britain could make such a declaration, but that France, for the present at least, could not.

N POLITIS

That the Allied army at Salonica was, for the first three years, quite inadequate, is now officially recognized. It was confirmed in the French Chamber on 25th June, 1920, by M. André Tardieu :—

To everyone in the know (he said) it was no secret that right up to the autumn of 1917 the Eastern army complained against its lack, both in men and equipment, of the means of action. In the autumn of 1917 reinforcements began to arrive, and in January–February, 1918, there were considerable arrivals. In June, 1918, General Franchet d'Esperey took command of the army; on 15th September began the decisive attack which led to victory.

These words of M. Tardieu justify King Constantine in his refusal to make war at the moment when he was asked to do so—that is, at the moment when the army of the East, “lacking, both in men and equipment, the means of action,” could not have given him adequate co-operation.

It is strange that the Allies should have thought that they had ground for complaint that partiality was displayed by King Constantine and his Government for the Central Powers. The feeling which they should have had is the exact opposite. For Greece, under King Constantine, did the Allies the same service that Belgium would have done Germany if, in non-observance of the Fifth Hague Convention, she had allowed the Germans free passage instead of resisting them.

## XI

In September, 1915, M. Guillemin had succeeded M. Deville as French Minister at Athens. He found French influence in Greece seriously shaken. That was the inevitable result of the Entente's mad attachment to Bulgaria. Unfortunately, M. Guillemin showed himself no skilful diplomat. He was at once frivolous, blundering and hot-headed. M. Venizelos knew very well how to play upon the weaknesses of M. Guillemin and to make him a docile tool for his own

passions. M. Guillemin always refused to adapt his actions to circumstances: he preferred to try to mould circumstances to his will. Later we shall see how, from sheer jealousy, he compromised the good work of M. Benazet, the French deputy, in improving Franco-Greek relations.

M. Guillemin's main idea, according to Admiral Dartige du Fournet, was armed intervention in Greece at all costs.<sup>1</sup> The Admiral, to describe the French Minister's state of mind, cites one act which tells us all about him. He asked for military intervention to keep on the bills at Athens a play favourable to the Entente!

Side by side with M. Guillemin was the French Intelligence Service, occultly at work in support of his official action. Admiral Dartige du Fournet writes of it as follows<sup>2</sup> :—

The part played by the Service in Greek affairs had hitherto been carefully kept in the dark, but it had been of capital importance. Its responsibility is involved in all the difficulties which we shall see unfold themselves. I must speak of it in detail. I mentioned Captain de Roquetaillade, who was sent to Greece as naval attaché and Chief of the Intelligence Service. These official titles did not long hide his real mission, which was to counteract German influence and to conduct counter-espionage. Furthermore, this officer played at Athens the part of a Hidden Hand which soon became all-powerful, thanks to his close personal relations with the Minister of the Navy.<sup>3</sup>

Beside and behind the French Minister and the Admiral, he had set himself up as a judge of the policy to be followed in Greece, and he criticized bitterly and most unfairly the actions of everyone, including some actions of the Government's

I do not know if his reports and telegrams are still preserved in the Rue Royale. But if they are still there, no impartial historian will be able to read the orders—they were no less—which he issued to Paris, without feeling an embarrassed amazement, or without wondering how thoughts and language so intemperate could have been endured in high places.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that since his recall from Greece in 1917 the French Government has not thought fit to appoint M. Guillemin to any diplomatic post.

<sup>2</sup> Admiral Dartige du Fournet, op. cit., p. 112

<sup>3</sup> Admiral Lacaze, Minister of the French Navy

When, in May, 1916, the Chief of the Intelligence Service attended the conference of Allied admirals, his proposal for complete control of Greek internal affairs and his plea for strong action were received with unanimous disapproval.

The reader will find below an account in detail of the outrages perpetrated by this officer against Greece and her people. He was a wild creature, and he pursued an individual and independent policy, based on his great influence in the Rue Royale. He had the further ambition to make Greece into another Senegal. When his project met with lively resistance, not only at the Quai D'Orsay, but still more from the Allies of France, he took an oblique course to his end. By secret agreement with M. Venizelos, he became an *agent provocateur*. He invented hateful calumnies on Greece : he intrigued and plotted in the hope of provoking a rupture between Greece and the Entente. With a prodigious number of false reports he swamped the Elysée, the Quai d'Orsay, the Rue Royale, the Senatorial Commissions, the Chamber of Deputies, even General Headquarters.<sup>1</sup> Though only a subordinate officer, he was in direct communication with Paris by special cipher.

At this time the Paris press was indignantly denouncing the part played at Athens by Baron von Schenk. Yet the Baron confined his propaganda to discourses in favour of neutrality—a subject on which Greek opinion had nothing to learn.

To-day every honest man's gorge will rise if he compares the merely oratorical activities of Herr von Schenk with the misdeeds of M. de Roquefeuil. We will only cite here the chief exploits of this officer ; a detailed account follows. It was he who spread the abominable lie that Greece had reprovisioned the German submarines, in order to justify the sanctions from which Greece has had so much to suffer. It was he who organized, on 9th September, 1916, an armed attack on the French Legation at Athens by Greeks in his pay in order to exasperate the Allied Cabinets into consenting to the occupation of the Greek capital. It was he who embarked M. Venizelos for Salonica in 1916, thus organizing

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, op. cit., pp. 115-16

a long internece war in Greece. Lastly, it was he, as we shall see below, who was responsible for the bloodshed on 1st December, 1916, for which misinformed French opinion has not yet forgiven Greece.

Furthermore, Admiral Dartige du Fournet accuses M. de Roquefeuil of the following actions<sup>1</sup> :—

He conducted searches, made secret arrests, maintained a political and even a private police. He had collected 25,000 memorauda, covering every person of note in Greece, had established a *depot* of explosives on a waterlogged hulk at the Piræus, and had assembled in the annex of the French School at Athens boxes of arms and of grenades. Could I associate myself with such manoeuvres? I never thought of it for a moment.

Finally, M. de Roquefeuil set himself up as a protector of M. Venizelos, who was now very unpopular in Greece, and organized with him a regular hunt against his *protégés* political opponents. In the Greek islands, on the coast, even in Athens, Greek citizens found themselves arrested by night in their own homes or, more precisely, carried off and mysteriously deported to French Africa, to Greek islets transformed into Allied gaols, or even into French concentration camps, on the sole charge that they were anti-Venizelists. Occasionally the unhappy victims of the naval attaché suffered the tortures customary among the savage inhabitants of some French colonies.

M. de Roquefeuil's vanity knew no limits. In 1916 he became intimately connected with his colleague, but rival and enemy, Baron von Schenk, whom he had so decried: and he asked Admiral Dartige du Fournet for a torpedo boat, to carry to Paris as quickly as possible a plan worked out by the two adventurers for a separate peace between France and Germany.

As we shall see below, the Naval Commission of the French Chamber, in a report unanimously arrived at on 24th September, 1919, admitted the "conduct unworthy of an officer" of which Commandant de Roquefeuil was guilty in Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, op. cit., pp. 116-17.

## XII

From 1915 to 1917 the French press continually accused Greece of provisioning the German submarines. The campaign aroused great excitement among the Allies with its "revolting details" of the new "Greek treachery", and the devilish reasoning with which the statements were supported. A great many people in France and Britain took these slanders in good faith. A fat book could be filled with the hideous accusations. We shall quote only a few characteristic specimens. Men read, in Paris journals current at the time, "Greece is no better than a hornet's nest of German submarines . . . The Greek coasts are one huge lair for German submarines . . . The German submarines go in and out of the Greek harbours as if they were their own!" In December, 1915, a great base for the provisioning of submarines was discovered at, of all places, Salonica!<sup>1</sup>

Paris was so ready to believe where neutral Greece was concerned that the more incredible the denunciations the more passionately were they accepted.

There followed an unending enumeration of oil depots on the Greek coasts, where, if the press of Paris and London was to be believed, the Allied authorities were perpetually discovering such depots. Newspapers quoted indefatigably the names of M. Venizelos' principal political opponents, who, magically, were found every time to be the organizers of these "clandestine" depots. The press rendered tribute to the "vigilance" of the Allied authorities, who were able to lay hands on these depots, "so cunningly concealed by the Germano-Greeks". Some Paris papers published inventions in the manner of Jules Verne: one of them swore that a workshop at Phalerum, the pleasure beach of Athens and the constant resort of strollers, had set up a diabolical subterranean and sub-aqueous contrivance by which submarines could arrive in full daylight and, while still submerged, attach themselves, 500 metres from the shore, to a pipe which yielded them huge quantities of oil. Queen Sophia

<sup>1</sup> It was omitted to explain how such a base could be set up in the very centre of an entrenched camp and in a bay entirely occupied, barred, controlled and fortified by the Allied fleets!

(it was gravely added) often came to Phalerum "about tea-time" to watch this operation. Finally, the whole French press long re-echoed the following fantastic myth. The Achilleion, the Emperor William's villa at Corfu, was, despite its innocent appearance, no better than a formidable submarine base, which had been laid out in time of peace. Every day it was announced in Paris that "fresh proofs" had been acquired that this was the chief base for German submarines in the Mediterranean. Hacks were to be found who could give a complete description of the arrangements, the vaults, the machinery and apparatus, for supplying German submarines in the shadow of the Achilleion garden. The reader, astounded at these sensational accounts, was filled with indignation and exasperation against "the Greeks and their King, who were capable of such abject felonies".

These slanders let loose passion until Paris looked on neutral Greece as an enemy more dangerous than the "Hun" himself. On 4th December M. Guillemin said angrily to M. Skouloudis that the French Admiralty was convinced that German submarines were being reprovisioned off the Greek coast.

In all this formidable indictment there was not a scintilla of truth. It was nothing more than a tissue of treacherous lies.

Already reflective spirits began to find the accusations at least a little strange. Greece produces no petroleum, and her very moderate imports from America had long since been rigorously rationed by the Allies themselves. Besides, it is known that the German submarines could proceed by themselves from Hamburg to the Ægean. Why, once in that sea, should these vessels look for a precarious base on the Greek coast, instead of the safe shelter offered in close proximity by the strong fortresses of Smyrna and the Dardanelles? But the most elementary logic had no effect on men's minds in the atmosphere of suspicion engendered by the War.

These abominable slanders, so cunningly concocted and spread over the world, were the work of Captain de Roquenfeuil's Intelligence Service. From his false reports the French

press imbibed its sensations. By an unhappy concatenation of circumstances, it was only a year after the war had ended that daylight began to fall on this officer's activities.

Admiral Dartige du Fournet, Commander in Chief of the Allied Fleet in Greece until December, 1916, was the first to tell the world the truth about the part played by M. de Roquetaillade. This is what the Admiral says<sup>1</sup> —

The Intelligence Service brought us nearly every day information about enemy submarines. Not one of its messages was ever proved to be correct, and most of them were obviously absurd. On the occasion of the Serbian transportation,<sup>2</sup> the Intelligence Service allowed itself, as usual, to be fooled by the adventurers in its pay, and re-echoed the German boast according to which half of the Serbs should never have arrived. The complete success of the operation was an embarrassing contradiction of these forewarnings. The Intelligence Service then put forward an hypothesis well worthy of its usual standard of information. The Emperor William had given orders not to attack the Serbs because he had a compact with them, and as soon as they were disembarked at Salonica they were to desert!

The Intelligence Office represented the Achilleion to us as a perfectly equipped submarine base, with a jetty for drawing alongside, stores of petrol, and piping leading this fuel down to the sea. The occupation of Corfu exploded all these myths. The jetty had been made for embarkations from the palace. The petrol was no more than a little spirit for the motors. The piping was the sanitary system.

This statement of the Admiral's was further confirmed by the Naval Commission of the French Chamber in its Report on 24th September, 1919.

Subsequently the Admiral, in reply to an article derogatory to Greece, which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*<sup>3</sup> and was signed by a Greek intimate of M. Venizelos, wrote :—

The revelations of the Venizelist press as to the provisioning of German submarines in Greece are a tissue of absurd inventions. Despite repeated inquiries, not one was ever found to be correct.

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> From Corfu to Salonica.

<sup>3</sup> 1st March 1917. Dartige du Fournet, p. 304.

A number of incompetent but malignant rascals lived by selling false news, and abused the simplicity or the carelessness of our Intelligence Service. A greater number of persons who wished to be thought well-informed and were absolutely ignorant repeated these stupidities. We have cited some examples—there were hundreds. Barges, tankers, tugs were taken for submarines, alleged stores were reported in absolutely inaccessible places, etc.

Such was the first great imposture played in Greece by M. de Roquetaillade.

### XIII

On 14th December General Sarrail retreated into Greek territory, with the Germans and the Bulgars on his heels. Paris was in agony. Would the enemy cross the Greek frontier? If so, would General Sarrail's army have time to re-embark without being caught and crushed by weight of numbers? Disaster seemed imminent. At Paris Ministers and prominent people implicated in the Salonica adventure were at their wits' ends.

The semi-official French press was immediately let loose. The Greeks, with a show of neutrality, would (it was said) give way to the Germans and Bulgars as they had before to the French and British. "What infamy! What a disgrace! What treachery!" cried the press with one voice.

In Paris they would have liked the Salonica expeditionary force, badly recruited and badly equipped, ~~numbering~~ scarcely tens of thousands of combatants, to be considered then by Greece the equivalent of the 150,000 Serbs provided for by the Treaty of Alliance. They would have liked King Constantine to rely on this poor embryo of an army, in order to inflict on his country the tragic fate of Belgium and Serbia.

### XIV

On 3rd December the German military attaché at Athens handed to King Constantine a very important telegram from General von Falkenhayn, threatening to cross the Greek frontier if the forces of the Entente were not neutralized by Greece as soon as they retired into her territory.

The telegram agonized Constantine and his Government. Despite the legitimate indignation caused by the Entente policy towards Greece, there could be no question of tolerating Bulgars on Greek soil. Accordingly, on 27th November/10th December, there happened an event of capital importance in the history of the War. King Constantine, on the advice of M. Skouloudis, intervened directly and personally with the Emperor William, and secured as a personal favour that there should be no offensive against the French and British on Greek territory. This step saved the expeditionary force from disaster.

On this occasion Herr von Jagow told M. Theotokis that King Constantine's step was "unheard of", that it was contrary to all good political principles, but that, in deference to the King of Greece, Germany had decided to accede to his request. She hoped that King Constantine would not soon have to repent his astonishing forbearance towards a foreign army which he had imprudently allowed to instal itself as master on his territory. In twenty-four hours Constantine's step had attained its end and borne its fruits. Greece escaped invasion by the Central Powers, and the Entente, or rather France, the destruction of one of her armies and a profound national humiliation.

It is sad to relate that not a single French voice was raised in recognition of this service. It is still sadder to think that General Sarrail, who would have been the first victim of the disaster, persisted as ever in his insults to the monarch to whom he owed his safety.

On 14th December M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Minister in Berlin :—

Please see the Minister for Foreign Affairs, urgently, and represent to him the grave danger to the internal order of our country which is presented by the approach of Bulgarian forces to our frontiers. Point out that, in the existing condition of the Allied army, the King's Government sees no military necessity for the pursuing armies to penetrate into Greek territory.

The King's Government would very much like to have the assurances of the Central Powers on this matter, in order to be able to prove to their country that they have done all in their power to avert the danger of a hostile, and especially a Bulgar, invasion;

for they are convinced that, if this invasion is not avoided, grave troubles may be expected, which may not only upset the best and firmest plans of the Government, but even overthrow the established order of things. Please make these declarations as firmly and clearly as possible

SKOULLOUDIS

In a telegram of 22nd December, addressed to M. Theotokis, the Greek Government demanded of the German Government four primary and fifteen secondary conditions for its non-resistance to invasion by the Central Powers. But these conditions were too rigorous for Germany herself and peculiarly humiliating for the Bulgars.<sup>1</sup> On the 28th M. Theotokis replied to the King that Herr von Jagow was "nonplussed" by the importance and the extent of the Greek conditions. An exchange of views was proceeding between the Government and the general staff, and the Greek demands had been "divided, as it were, into three groups": the first contained those easy to accept, the second those which could be discussed, the third those thought impossible to accede to. At the moment Falkenhayn was of the opinion that Sarrail should be "thrown into the sea". But Greek rigidity forced Germany momentarily to abandon the project of an offensive, and lost her the best chance she had to rid herself thoroughly of the Army of Salonica.

The intervention of King Constantine at Berlin was not well understood in Allied diplomatic circles. It was underestimated and even interpreted as hostile to the Entente. On 25th December M. Clemenceau wrote in *L'Homme Enchaîné* on the situation at Salonica:—

What are the real reasons for the halt in the German-Bulgarian offensive? . Our offensive ended in a retreat and an organized defensive. The defensive seems not less risky, considering objectively the forces present and the means of action possessed by either side

M. Clemenceau's remark was strictly accurate.

<sup>1</sup> According to these conditions, Germany was to guarantee to Greece the absolute integrity of her soil against the Bulgars, and to forbid the latter, should they enter Greek territory, to camp in towns or villages; Monastir was to be occupied by the Greek army as a pledge of Bulgarian good faith. Secondary, but not less rigorous, conditions followed.

## XV

On 28th December the *Temps* drew attention to the sympathy with France shown on the occasion of General de Castelnau's visit to Athens, on his way to inspect the camp entrenched at Salonica. General Sarrail informs us that during his visit to Salonica General de Castelnau advised him to have King Constantine made away with by assassins<sup>1</sup>. If this is true, then the Greek people's esteem for this general was ill-deserved.

## XVI

On 30th November Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>2</sup> :—

King Constantine granted me an audience, and spoke to me in the same terms as to the Italian Minister. I hastened to reassure him, and was careful to conceal our *avant-pensée* of bringing Greece into the war . . .

On 2nd December Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>3</sup> :—

Briand told me that he continues to insist at London that definite demands must be presented to Greece, and coercive measures taken against her. He attributes the worsening of the situation at Athens to Kitchener's action in not concealing from King Constantine the Allied project of evacuating Salonica. The King realized from this the disagreements between the Allies, and a loss of prestige results. Briand explains by this Constantine's offer to escort the Allied armies in case of evacuation. He considers this offer impudent and humiliating for the Allies. He believes that they ought consequently to show firmness against Greece, and shake their fists at her.

At this time Lord Grey thought quite otherwise. He thought it important to evacuate Salonica; and on 6th December, in a despatch to Lord Bertie, he recommended the conclusion of an agreement with Greece, in virtue of which, in return for the promise that the Entente would evacuate her territories, she should undertake to defend her frontiers so as to ensure the safe re-embarkation of the expeditionary force.<sup>4</sup> In other words, Grey thought of

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Ditto.

<sup>4</sup> Grey, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 224.

proposing to Greece just what King Constantine was offering at just the same moment ; the offer which drew on him the wrath of M. Briand.

On 3rd December Isvolsky sent a fresh despatch to Petrograd<sup>1</sup>.—

We learn from London that Kitchener is openly declaring his intention to evacuate Salonica, on threat of resignation, which would entail the fall of the British Cabinet. Briand, meanwhile, is determined not only to keep the Salonica expedition in being, but even to enlarge its range of action, with help from Russia and Italy. If Briand does not succeed in convincing Britain, we shall, in Jules Cambon's view, be face to face with an inevitable ministerial crisis in France.

On 6th December the same ambassador telegraphed<sup>1</sup> :—

Briand told me to-day that at the Conference at Calais he had insisted on the maintenance of the base at Salonica, which is easy to defend with the forces on the spot. He proposes to transfer thither 350,000 to 400,000 effectives, and next spring to undertake a general offensive on all fronts, the Balkan included.

Briand's plan was violently opposed by the British, that is by Kitchener. After a long discussion, Kitchener consented to postpone evacuation for four or five weeks. Briand is irritated by the British persistence. He has decided to persevere with might and main in the defence of his plan. I asked him what would happen if Britain was obstinate in refusal. He admitted that Salonica must then be evacuated, but said that he would in no case transport the French troops to France. He would encamp them in the neighbourhood—in the Greek islands—so as to be able to take the first good chance to recommence operations in the Balkans.

In this grave matter M. Briand let himself be governed at once by illusions and by preoccupation with internal policy.

Two years later M. Clemenceau wrote ironically on the same topic<sup>2</sup> :—

The startling failure of the Dardanelles enterprise led M. Briand to believe that a touch of his genius at Salonica would obliterate ~~any~~<sup>all</sup> memories, while providing him cheaply with admittance on an equal footing into the circle of the chief actors in history.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>2</sup> *Homme Enchaîné*, 14th June, 1917

On the 11th Isvolsky reported to Petrograd that at the military conference at Chantilly the British had again demanded the evacuation of Salonica.<sup>1</sup> On the 12th he was rejoicing in some concessions made by the British in the course of the Conference at Calais; though these were but temporary.<sup>2</sup> On the 14th Demidov reported the suspension of coercive measures against Greece (in the form of restricted imports), despite French opposition.<sup>3</sup> On the 15th Isvolsky learned from Briand of the latter's efforts to obtain from the British the definite abandonment of evacuation. Briand added that "he had reason to hope that, in view of the agreement arrived at between Germany, Bulgaria and Greece, the German army would not cross the frontier."<sup>4</sup> Doubtless it was King Constantine's intervention at Berlin which M. Briand, badly informed, described as "an agreement":—

On the 18th Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>5</sup> :—

The Greek Government is trying hard to prevent the entry into Greek territory of the Germans, Austrians, and Bulgars—especially the last, they point out that neutrality will otherwise be difficult to maintain, I believe that negotiations are going on simultaneously at Athens and Berlin

On the 22nd Isvolsky sent the news<sup>6</sup> that he had just received from the Quai d'Orsay a note recommending that measures of economic pressure be taken against Greece "in restraint of the importation of goods which Greece vitally needs". This perpetual rancour of French diplomacy against a small neutral country was really depressing. On 25th December Demidov told Petrograd of M. Venizelos' underhand action in appealing against his country<sup>7</sup> :—

Venizelos has just drawn our attention to the threat against Entente interests contained in the Government's projected declaration of a state of siege in Athens and in certain other towns. The purpose of this measure is to restrict the freedom of the Press, to rob the Opposition of free expression of its opinion, and above all to take extraordinary measures against the Venizelists.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>3</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>4</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>5</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>6</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>7</sup> Russian White Book.

On 28th December Demidov reported 'the audience given by the King to the British Minister, Sir F. Elliot.

The King's grievance is entirely against the French—Brand and Guillemin. He attributes the pressure put upon Greece solely to French inspiration. The King thinks it important to ask the Chamber to establish a state of siege. Sir Francis remarked that this would have unpleasant consequences in the Allied countries. The King replied that it was a measure of legitimate defence, since Venizelos' action sets him openly against the established order and the sovereign's person.

"The foreign policy of Greece," added the King, "is dictated by My People. Greece is thinking above everything of her territorial integrity, she does not wish to see the Russians at Constantinople. Germany has guaranteed our territorial integrity so long as we remain neutral."

"Then why mobilize?" objected Sir Francis.

"Fear of Bulgaria compels us. But if the general situation of the Entente improves Greece will be able to join it."

## XVII

From December onward M. Venizelos' action against his country stands out in clear relief. Through the French Legation at Athens he secretly harassed the French Government with false accusations against his country: he thundered anathemas against his fellow citizens. By this action he hoped to bring France to strike a blow at once against the rulers and the people of Greece, both hostile to himself. In the archives of the Quai d'Orsay there are abundant documents which confirm this. Here are some, hitherto unpublished, which refer to this period:—

On 18th December, 1915, M. Guillemin telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay that he had just seen M. Venizelos again "after an interval of four weeks, so as not to compromise him at the moment when we must take against Greece measures of which he must not seem to be the instigator."

M. Guillemin reported M. Venizelos' very words:—

You have nothing to explain to me. I understand everything. You have to deal with rascals who are ridiculing you and laughing at you. Your presence at Salonica embarrasses them. If they could

they would hand you over to the Germans. You will only hold them by fear and by the threat of famine. That is your greatest asset. Above all, let corn into Greece only a little at a time.

On 23rd December M. Briand telegraphed to M. Guillemin at Athens, to say that M. Romanos had just explained to him Venizelos' plan of campaign against the Royal Family. M. Briand was impressed, and told M. Guillemin that he would send 350,000 francs to support the campaign. In a telegram dated 28th December M. Briand informed M. Guillemin of the offer by Sir Basil Zaharoff of several millions of francs for Allied propaganda in Greece; but, in his ignorance of M. Venizelos's character, inquired whether there was any chance of his accepting the money. On the 30th M. Guillemin replied that M. Venizelos accepted with delight and gratitude the offer of Sir Basil Zaharoff. Finally, on 31st December, 1915, M. Venizelos telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay through the French Legation at Athens "to let no corn into Greece except by driplets, and to let no money in at all". In the same telegram Venizelos offered, if need be, "to raise a terrible revolution in Athens and to shatter the King." This last telegram was signed by a former French Deputy, Henry Turot, sent to Athens under the title of "Contractor for Public Works", but really in secret control, for the moment, of the French Legation.

One cannot but be amazed at the spectacle of a statesman of Venizelos' rank speculating on the hunger and the misery of his fellow citizens in order to obtain power by the support of foreigners. "Treachery" is an ugly word. But if it were not used in circumstances like these it would have lost all its meaning.

## CHAPTER VII

### SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY (CONTINUATION)

(*January–March, 1916*)

The occupation of Corfu and its legal aspect—Castellorizo—Arrest of the Consuls of the Central Powers at Salonica—Demir-Hissar and Karaburnu—Germany warns Greece of an impending offensive against Salonica—Statement by King Constantine to the Associated Press and the Quai d'Orsay's reply—Various happenings in January—Occurrences in February.—General Sarrail's visit to King Constantine—M. Venizelos' speeches and actions—The Allied Secret Service in Greece—Second Plan of a German attack on Salonica.

#### I

The most important event of January, 1916, from the point of view of international law and morality was the occupation of Corfu by the French, acting in the name of the Allies, with a view to turning it into a military base, rest camp, and re-equipment depot for the Serbian troops after their retreat through Albania.

It was unquestionably the Allies' duty to provide a refuge for the Serbian army, but to choose Corfu for this purpose was a deplorable step, seeing that it was not only part of the territory of a non-belligerent, but also an island which had been declared permanently neutral, exactly like Belgium, in solemn international engagements, signed and sealed by representatives of Great Britain, France, and Russia, with other States. In particular, the Treaty of London, signed on 29th March, 1864, by France, Great Britain and Russia, on the one hand and by Greece on the other, dealing with the cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece, stipulated (Article 2) that :—

The islands of Corfu and Paxos, with their dependencies, on becoming part of the Kingdom of the Hellenes, shall enjoy the advantages of perpetual neutrality. This is proclaimed by the three

Great Powers acting as guarantors in regard to Greece, with the concurrence of Austria and Prussia, and the King of the Hellenes undertakes to maintain this neutrality

Such a treaty, which laid down explicitly that Corfu was to be a permanently neutral island where the sovereign state itself could not maintain any military forces other than those necessary to meet local requirements, was obviously flagrantly infringed by the introduction of a foreign army on active service.

On 10th January the four Ministers of the Allied Powers at Athens handed to M. Skouloudis a Note in which it was stated that

A detailed investigation of the circumstances governing the evacuation of the Serbian army, if these heroic soldiers are to be rescued from famine and destruction, has led the Allied Powers to the conclusion that it is essential to convey them to Corfu, no other solution being adequate to meet the exigencies of the situation

The note concluded by expressing the conviction that Greece would not think of opposing the transport of the Serbs to Corfu, particularly as they were her allies, and by promising that this provisional decision to accommodate the Serbs at Corfu should in no case lead to any claims on Greece.

This was a strange document, in that, while bringing pressure to bear on Greece, a neutral state, to give up one of her possessions, it at the same time presented her with a *fait accompli*, since Vice-Admiral Chocheprat arrived at Corfu at the very moment the Note was being presented at Athens and proceeded to occupy the island forthwith (10th–11th January).

On 11th January M. Skouloudis sent the following urgent telegram to the Greek Minister in Paris :—

Last night a French force landed in Corfu and hoisted the French flag on the jetty. A few hours later, French troops closed the wireless station and entered the German Emperor's estate (the Achilleion), where the French flag was also hoisted. These actions not only constitute a flagrant violation of Greek territory, but also contravene international law, since under the treaties of 14th November, 1863, and 29th March, 1864, signed by France, Britain, and Russia, together

with Austria and Prussia, the island of Corfu is permanently neutral, and the observance of this neutrality, like that of Belgium, Luxemburg, and Switzerland, is an especially solemn obligation for those Powers who combined to set it up.

This telegram was followed on 13th January by a further telegram in these terms :—

Please add to your communication to M. Briand that, in a letter addressed by the French Admiral to the Prefect of Corfu, it is incorrectly stated that the choice of Corfu for the accommodation of Serbian troops was decided upon by the Allied Powers with the concurrence of the Greek Government.

On the same day M. Skouloudis, in his reply to the Note of 10th January from the Allied Ministers at Athens, marshalled his arguments against the occupation of Corfu from the point of view of international law and morality.<sup>1</sup> He recapitulated the agreements under which the island had been declared permanently neutral, and continued :—

The fact that the troops to be admitted were Serbian does not modify the position in any way, since the neutrality of Greece remains entirely unimpaired so long as her alliance with Serbia is not put into practical effect.

As regards the claims of humanity which had been invoked by the Allied Powers, he pointed out that :—

Far from weighing in favour of the violation of Corfu's neutrality, they go to uphold the maintenance of the legal aspect, for cholera is already taking a heavy toll of the Serbian troops and every dictate of humanity would forbid laying the population of Corfu open to the risk of such a serious epidemic.

On 20th January the British Minister at Athens intimated verbally to M. Skouloudis his Government's reply to the Greek protest against the violation of Corfu. As regards the actual occupation, it maintained that this was of a temporary nature only and on all fours with the occupation of other Greek islands which had already been necessary. (In other words, the British Minister attempted to justify one contravention of international law by comparing it with other previous contraventions.) As regards the question

<sup>1</sup> Greek Foreign Ministry's archives

of permanent neutrality, Sir Francis Elliot argued that Greece had no right to base any representations on these treaties as she herself had repeatedly violated that neutrality, e.g. in 1897, when a Greek army had set out from Corfu to attack Preveza and bombard Santi Quaranta, and again in 1912, when the latter city had been occupied by a Greek army from Corfu; not to speak of her having for many years maintained a garrison there and imposed compulsory military service on the inhabitants!

On receiving this communication, M. Skouloudis at once formally denied that the arguments used had any adequate foundation, and went on to say to the British Minister: "Am I to assume from what you say that you regard the treaties which provide for Corfu to be permanently neutral as null and void from now onwards? Would you be good enough to let me have that in writing, so that I may take note of it." Sir F. Elliot, not having expected to be asked for a written statement, retorted somewhat hastily: "I never said that. I merely said, how can you protest against the violation of the neutrality of Corfu by the Allies to-day, when you yourselves have violated it in the past?"

"Since you yourself admit," replied M. Skouloudis, "that notwithstanding all these alleged violations in the past, the neutrality of Corfu is still a fact, I am at a loss to understand how you can complain of our protest against your present act of violation."<sup>1</sup>

Sir Francis had no sooner left than M. Guillemin called and read out to M. Skouloudis a reply from M. Briand in identical terms, to which the Greek Premier returned a similar answer. His request for a written statement evoked from M. Guillemin a flood of angry protests against what he termed a misinterpretation of what he had said. Whereupon M. Skouloudis repeated: "If you admit that Corfu has never ceased to benefit by the treaties which stipulate that the island is to be permanently neutral, why are you surprised at our protest now?"

It will be realized that the Allied reply to the Greek protest was ludicrous from the point of view of international law. But Greece, being a little country lacking the material

<sup>1</sup> Greek archives.

power to obstruct the great Alliance, could be disregarded with that insolent contempt which goes with a sense of superior force.

At the same time, some excuse had to be found for the occupation of Corfu to placate public opinion, for the German propaganda service was naturally jubilant. It had published the texts of the treaties defining Belgian neutrality and that of Corfu in parallel columns, and pointed out that, since the two cases were identical in law, the Allies had no longer any legal or moral right to reproach Germany for her invasion of Belgium! German propaganda went still further, and drew attention to the fact that, whereas Germany had straightforwardly notified the Belgian Government of her intentions in advance and even allowed time for a reply, France had attempted to cover up the guilt of her aggression in violating the neutrality of Corfu by a flood of wordy hypocrisy.

The Quai d'Orsay therefore set about launching counter-propaganda through its usual organs, taking care, however, to avoid repeating the dubious arguments employed by the Allied Ministers at Athens. French propaganda did not scruple to make use of statements in this connexion which, re-read in the cold light of to-day, fill one with shame. This, for instance, is how M. J. Herbette, the most brilliant propagandist writer in France during the war and the post-war period, carried out his instructions in the *Echo de Paris* (16th January, 1916) :—

The treaty of 1864 stipulated that the King of the Hellenes on his part was to ensure that the neutrality of Corfu was maintained. But we know very well that this neutrality was flagrantly violated by agents of the Central Powers in Greece, who have turned Corfu into a very nest of spies and a base for submarines.

The writer here departed from the familiar ground of sophistry to put into circulation a cold and calculated lie. We have already shown that these Greek submarine bases were nothing but a malicious invention, and have quoted a statement by Admiral Dartige du Fournet (Commander in Chief of the French fleet which took possession of Corfu) which was confirmed by the report dated 24th September.

1919, of the Naval Commission of Inquiry appointed by the French Chamber of Deputies.

## II

About this time a series of grave outrages were committed against Greece, each one with the accompaniment of futile duplicity and brutality, simply designed to humiliate a little nation which only claimed to exercise her undoubted right to remain aloof from the war.

Castellorizo is a small island of 10,000 inhabitants, all Greeks, lying off the south coast of Asia Minor. It had been in Greek occupation since 1913. The French vice-consul at Rhodes conceived the plan of fomenting a revolt of the islanders against the Greek Government, and hired a ruffian named Lacardis, who was already in the pay of the French Secret Service.<sup>1</sup> This individual got together a band of insurgents, captured the local police and the chief magistrate, and proclaimed the independence of the island, sending the municipal records to Paris. The Greek Government thereupon dispatched the cruiser *Helle* with forty police to restore order, but the French Ægean squadron passed false information to the Captain of the *Helle* that mines had been laid in the neighbourhood of Castellorizo, and while the *Helle* went off in search of the French warship from which his kindly informants told him he could obtain a chart of the mine-field, the French squadron took possession of the island (28th December, 1915).

The Greek Government sent a protest to Paris against this act of aggression, but received no reply, not even an acknowledgment. But the *Temps* (4th January, 1916), obstinately clinging to the baseless legend, applauded the occupation as a step towards the destruction of the "lairs of pirates and freebooters", while the *Echo de Paris*, in a further burst of irony, lauded the "patriotism" of the Greek hireling who had engineered the coup!

The outcome of this miserable intrigue was that, after the war, Casteliorizo was allotted to Italy, in defiance of the wishes of its inhabitants and of the principle of self-determination

<sup>1</sup> Confirmed by Demidov, Russian White Book, 1922. Telegram from Athens, 28th December, 1916.

to which lip-service had been paid so loudly while the war was on.

On 30th December General Sarrail made an air raid on Salonica the excuse for arresting the German, Austrian, Bulgarian, and Turkish consuls in that town, together with their families and staffs, and for taking possession of the consulate premises. He argued that by bombing Salonica the Germans had made it part of the war-zone, and that it was therefore quite proper to treat all enemy nationals in that district as prisoners of war.<sup>1</sup> This was, however, a vain contention, since it was the action of the Allies in turning Salonica into an armed camp which had first made it part of the war-zone and thus provoked the air raid.

The Greek Government had foreseen this development, and on 19th December M. Skouloudis had instructed the Greek Ministers in Paris and London by wire to ascertain the intentions of the French and British Governments in this respect, and to request that the individuals in question might be given facilities for leaving Salonica if the need arose. The reply from Paris, on the following day, was to the effect that the Foreign Ministry had denied all knowledge of any special measures in regard to these persons, whilst the Greek Minister in London had obtained only an evasive reply. It is clear that General Sarrail acted without orders, merely following his normal custom of insulting the country whose guest he happened to be.

The Athens Government protested loudly, both to Paris and London, against this violation of Greek sovereignty, but, of course, with no result. Nor did they fail to forward a vigorous protest to Berlin (31st December, 1915) against the German air attack, whereupon they received from Berlin and Vienna Notes of a threatening character. To these M. Skouloudis had to reply that "Greece was unfortunately not in a position to insist by show of force upon obtaining satisfaction for infringements of her neutrality and sovereignty", but merely undertook to request the Allies to set free the complete staffs who had been arrested. (Note to the Ministers of the Central Powers, 2nd January, 1916.)

<sup>1</sup> *Temps*, 4th January, 1916; General Sarrail, *Mon Commandement en Orient*, pp 74-5 (E Flammarion, Paris).

On 3rd January M. Theotokis reported to Athens by wire that Herr von Jagow had said that he would hold the Greek Government responsible for everything that happened at Salonica. M. Briand also took offence at the Greek protest, and spoke to the Greek Minister at Paris in a very severe tone. M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the latter on 10th January in the following terms :—

Please take the earliest opportunity of informing M. Briand that while he may dislike receiving protests from us, we are just as sorry to have to make them, and only do so because we are absolutely forced, both for our own dignity's sake and to protect ourselves *vis-à-vis* third parties, who are holding us responsible, sometimes in very forcible language, for acts of the Allies which infringe our sovereign rights You can assure him that, while we appreciate good treatment and resent bad, we desire nothing better than to be always in a position to address the French Government with the utmost courtesy and consideration

On 12th January General Sarrail, acting this time definitely against orders from Paris,<sup>1</sup> blew up without any warning the important bridge of Demir-Hissar. This step was generally recognized at the time as ill-advised and as showing a lack of cool judgment on Sarrail's part. He would still have had time to destroy this bridge if the enemy had threatened an offensive from that direction, but by cutting off the normal access to Eastern Macedonia without any plausible strategic motive he merely gave the Bulgarians a certain amount of relief. But, as he wrote later in his memoirs,<sup>2</sup> he was "set upon" destroying the bridge, and this personal motive was probably the only one that counted. The bridge was guarded by half a company of Greek soldiers. Sarrail sent three companies to destroy it, and he relates in his book without a blush how he abused the trust and the courtesy shown by the Greek authorities toward the French, blowing up the bridge without notice before the very eyes of the Greek garrison.

The agreement, signed on 9th December, 1915, between the Greek Government and the Allied Ministers with Lord

<sup>1</sup> Gen. Sarrail, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. Sarrail, op. cit., pp. 94-5.

Kitchener's approval (see above, Chap. VI, p. 96), had provided for the fortress of Karaburnu, to the south of Salonica, to retain its small Greek garrison. The guns mounted there were in any case so small that the idea of its constituting any danger to the Allies was quite absurd. General Sarrail, referring to this fortress in his book (p. 99), mentions ironically that while he had himself received instructions by telegram from the French G.H.Q. that "he was to refuse the Greeks nothing", Admiral Gauchet had at the same time been ordered by the French Admiralty to take possession of the Karaburnu batteries, whilst the Foreign Ministry's view was that they had no objection to the fortress being occupied so long as the Greeks were not ejected. True to his principle, General Sarrail interpreted these contradictory instructions by disregarding those that savoured of moderation. Losing sight more and more of the German-Bulgarian enemy, he was only too glad to join Admiral Gauchet in striking another blow at Greece, a neutral State. There was no need to look far afield for the necessary pretext to justify in the eyes of the rest of the world this outrage that they were contemplating; the well-worn subterfuge of enemy submarines would suffice!

The subsequent occurrences are described in unmistakable terms in telegrams of warm protest sent to Paris by the Greek Government, e.g. :—

ATHENS.

*28th January, 1916.*

To-day at 7 a m a mixed detachment of French troops laid siege to the fortress of Karaburnu, and took prisoner one of our officers who went out to meet them, and one n c o. The French troops advanced with fixed bayonets past our sentries and the line formed by the garrison and entered the barracks. An officer who demanded the reason for this intrusion was told that a temporary occupation had been decided on with a view to hunting down submarines (*sac*). The Governor was shown a letter from the French G H Q., which stated that the French occupation was taking place "by agreement with the Greek general staff", but he was not allowed to keep the letter. Our military authorities were warned that they must leave the fortress as quickly as possible, as it was impossible to share the quarters. You are requested to inform M Briand of the foregoing, emphasizing the facts firstly that the seizure of Karaburnu is a

contravention of the agreement of 9th December, and secondly that this is the third occasion (the two previous cases being the destruction of Demir-Hissar Bridge and the occupation of Corfu) on which the French army authorities have attempted to mislead our authorities by alleging that prior agreement had been reached with either the Greek general staff or the Greek Government

SKOULLOUDIS

There are numerous other instances, less spectacular but equally serious, of violations of Greek sovereignty which occurred about the same time; for instance, the arrest of all the consuls of the Central Powers in the Greek seaports, without even a pretext being offered; the destruction of several smaller bridges and telegraph lines in Macedonia, and last, not least, the arrest by the French authorities of Greek subjects on *Greek territory* which began about this time as a result of the activities of Venizelist informers.

### III

On 6th January Herr von Jagow informed M. Theotokis (who transmitted the news by wire to Athens) that General Falkenhayn was of opinion that an offensive would have to be launched shortly against Salonica. He explained to him in detail the general assurances that Germany would be prepared formally to offer to Greece, viz. (a) Greek territorial integrity to be guaranteed, (b) Greek territory to be promptly evacuated after the event, and (c) any damage caused by warlike operations on Greek soil to be compensated by an indemnity. In return, and with a view to avoiding friction between the German forces and the Greeks, Falkenhayn suggested that the Greek Macedonian army should be withdrawn to a line drawn between Lake Prespa and the Gulf of Katerini, and requested that the necessary movements should be carried out without delay as it was urgently necessary to begin the offensive. Herr von Jagow concluded by asserting that the German advance on Salonica was just as much to the interest of Greece because she would thereby be delivered from the Allied yoke. In his reply, dated 13th January, M. Skouloudis emphasized the inadequacy of the assurances offered by Germany and asserted that it was impossible for Greece to withdraw her army to the

Prespa-Katerini line ; since, apart from the fact that the movement was not necessitated by Greek interests, the Allies would inevitably interpret it as a step taken by Greece in connivance with Germany and the consequences to Greece might be serious.

On 21st January M. Theotokis reported to Athens that General Falkenhayn had just communicated to him the following revised conditions for the attack on Salonica :

- (a) Greek troops on the frontiers from Prespa to Nestos to be withdrawn
- (b) The Fifth Greek Army Corps to be concentrated near Cavalla
- (c) All other Greek forces to be concentrated south of the Prespa-Katerini line.
- (d) Greece to undertake to prevent, by force if need be, any landing by the Allies in the Gulfs of Cavalla and Katerini

On 27th January M. Skouloudis sent through M. Theotokis the following clear and unequivocal reply :

Greece cannot possibly give the undertakings suggested by General Falkenhayn, especially as that at (d) would, if the case arose, involve a declaration of war against the Allies. Greece is determined to adhere to her neutral attitude so long as her national interests do not demand a change of policy.

This closed the correspondence between Berlin and Athens regarding the Salonica offensive. and negotiations were not reopened until six weeks later, in connexion with a fresh proposal from General Falkenhayn which will be referred to in a subsequent chapter.

#### IV

In January King Constantine gave an interview to the Associated Press, in which he made a moving appeal to the American public on behalf of his native land, and painted a striking picture of the existing situation. Mr. Paxton Hibben, the Associated Press representative, has described<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Constantine I and the Greek People*, by Paxton Hibben, pp. 173-5 (The Century Co., New York, 1920). It is noteworthy that Mr. Hibben was the first to raise his voice in the Allied countries after the war to protest against the campaign of lies against King Constantine. The book was published without consulting the King.

the adventures of the report of this interview, which caused a considerable stir. His original telegram was stopped by the French and British censors, and he had to threaten to send it by wireless via Berlin or alternatively to convey it to New York himself. The matter was referred to M. Briand, who realized that it would be wiser to pass the interview, but stipulated that a semi-official French reply should be published simultaneously.

The interview accordingly appeared in the Paris Press on 22nd January, accompanied by the Quai d'Orsay's rejoinder. Both are reprinted below:

King Constantine this morning sent for a correspondent of the Associated Press in order to express through the Press of the United States his deep indignation at what he called "the unprecedented courtesy displayed by the Allies in their recent actions toward Greece." His Majesty, who showed signs of strong emotion, read a long and detailed list of the violations of Greek sovereignty by the Allies.

"It is sheer hypocrisy," he said, "for Great Britain and France to complain of the violation of the neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg after what they themselves have done and are still doing in Greece. I have tried again and again to get the English and French Press to publish a fair statement of the facts so as to enable the public in those countries to arrive at an impartial verdict, but the only open platform from which I can reach public opinion is the Press of America.

"Just consider the details of the invasion of Greek territory already carried out by Allied troops. The total area occupied bears the same proportion to the whole of Greece as the territory captured by the U.S.A. from Mexico in the Mexican war to the whole of the United States. Imagine that area occupied by foreign troops without even asking your permission! They talk of indemnifying us for the damage caused after the war is over. How can they recompense my people for their sufferings in being driven out of their homes? They say military necessity is paramount. That was the reason why Germany invaded Belgium and occupied Luxemburg. It is no use claiming that the neutrality of Greece was not guaranteed by the Powers in the same way as that of Belgium, for the neutrality of Corfu was solemnly guaranteed by Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and

Prussia, and that has made no difference. In what way did military necessity demand the destruction of the Demir-Hissar Bridge, which cost 1½ million drachmae and was the only practicable route for carrying supplies to our troops in Eastern Macedonia? The bridge was already mined, and could have been blown up in a moment if any enemy force had approached, but it is an unchallehdged fact that there were no enemy forces anywhere near the bridge.

"Again, what made the occupation of Corfu necessary? True, Greece is Serbia's ally, but so is Italy, and troops could be more easily transported from Albania to Italy than to Corfu. Is not the real reason that Italy has refused to admit the Serbs for fear they might bring cholera with them? Why should the Allies impose the risk of cholera upon the Greeks rather than on the Italians?

"Again, the Allies say they have occupied Castellorizo, Corfu, and other places in order to look for submarine bases. The British Legation at Athens has offered a reward of £2,000—a fortune to any Greek fisherman—for any information leading to the discovery of a submarine base in Greece, but no such information has yet been forthcoming, nor has any proof been established of any submarine getting supplies from any point in Greece.

"The history of the Allies' Balkan policy is one series of gross blunders, and now, piqued at the failure of all their Balkan schemes, they are trying to make Greece bear the consequences of their own stupidity. We warned them that their Gallipoli adventure was doomed to failure, that their negotiations with Bulgaria would be fruitless, and that the Central Powers would be sure to crush Serbia. The Allies would not believe us, and now, like headstrong children, they are angry and want to blame Greece. They have deliberately sacrificed all their chances of retaining Greek good-will."

The French rejoinder was circulated to the Press with this introductory remark:

The Havas Agency has received for publication some comments by a highly placed French authority who was asked by the Associated Press to throw some further light on the conduct of Greece towards the Allies.

The document runs as follows:

The interview given by the King of the Hellenes to the Associated Press contains so many inaccuracies that it is necessary to enter into some detail to expose the emptiness of his accusations against the Allies. He charges the Allies with hypocrisy for complaining of

Germany's violation of the neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg *after* what they have done and are doing in Greece. But they complained of this *before*, for the excellent reason that Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg in time of peace, without either excuse or provocation, for the purpose of attacking France, whereas what is happening in Greece, quite apart from the many other considerations which will be dealt with later, is the outcome of a prolonged period of war which has been characterized by the crushing of small nations by Germany.

Such meaningless phrase-mongering must evoke, according to the propensities of the reader, either laughter, amazement, or indignation, when it is remembered that by the Treaty of Angora in 1921, a later French Government, contrary to French pledges, recognized and ratified the crushing of the "small nation" of Armenia and the return of Ionia and Thrace to Turkish tyranny!

The King declares that the Allies have occupied Greek territory without his permission. There is no question of an occupation properly so called, but of utilization due to certain circumstances. As to the islands referred to, Turkey has always refused to recognize Greek ownership of them, and the Powers have made temporary use of them with the tacit consent of Greece, who only protested *pro forma*.

The distinction sought to be made between the utilization and the occupation of a neutral territory may fairly be described as a quibble. The two notions are inseparable. To utilize territory it is necessary to occupy it; to occupy it is to utilize it. Whatever motives may have influenced a belligerent, the violation of neutrality is unquestionable, even if the neutral State gave its consent. In the present case there was no consent, since Greece protested at every turn. Turkey's non-recognition of Greek sovereignty over certain Asiatic islands may have furnished the semblance of a legal argument to the Quai d'Orsay; but the occupation of Corfu, and of the other islands of ancient Greece, could not be bolstered up by the same argument except with a deliberate intention of misleading opinion.

As regards Salonica the case is even farther from that put forward by the King. Serbia, attacked on two fronts, was not in a position to send to the front alongside the Greeks the 150,000 men envisaged

by the Treaty of Alliance. It was to replace these 150,000 men that the Allies went to Greece, on the request of the Greek Government itself, which was only prepared to mobilize on this condition.

Be it noted that up to the date when the Quai d'Orsay published this "reply", the Allies had not succeeded in completing at Salonica the 150,000 effectives solemnly promised to Greece in September, 1915, whose presence, under Article 2 of the Greco-Serb military convention, was to determine the entry of Greece into the war. Finally, how can it be forgotten that, beginning with the simple request for passage through Salonica, the Allies ended by claiming the exclusive use of a part of Greek territory and its progressive transformation into a theatre of war? And this without the slightest consideration of the diplomatic difficulties created for Greece, whom it was actually hoped in this way to compromise with the Central Powers.

From the outset the neutrality of Greece was *benevolent* as regards the Allies, not only Venizelos but his successors officially declared this many times. In recent months, however, the Greek Government has, in fact, allowed its neutrality to be violated by the Germans and Austrians, who have taken possession of its coasts and islands as a provisioning base for their submarines. The fact that it has been impossible to localize this base proved the cleverness of the Germans; but their fury at the presence of the Allies at Castellonzo, Corfu, and other points known to be nests of submarines, proves the reality of their organization.

Comment on this is superfluous! It has been shown in the preceding pages that the provisioning of German submarines in Greece was a detestable lie, which will remain branded for ever by history. To think that this gratuitous accusation should have emanated from the Quai d'Orsay itself, with the addition of the barefaced confession of inability to localize the bases which it declared to exist! Yet the Allies, absolute mistresses of the seas, had for eight months deliberately set aside every provision of maritime law, and had taken full liberty to carry out visits of inspection in Greek waters and along Greek coasts! To lie as audaciously as this in order to throw suspicion upon a little neutral country—was this the way to advance the cause of France against Germany?

It will be interesting some day to learn what has been revealed on this subject by the papers seized from the consuls and agents of the Germanic Quadruple Alliance at Salonica, Mitylene, and Corfu. It is from Greek shores, islands or peninsulas that the pirates set sail who sank the *Ancona* and the *Persia*.

These papers have since been very minutely examined by those interested, but however much they wanted to they have never found the shadow of an indication incriminating Greece, her islands or her shores !

The violent epithets applied by King Constantine to the policy of the Allies cannot alter the facts. The Greek Government was so little persuaded of the coming failure of the Gallipoli enterprise that it did everything in its power to associate itself with it, and only its exaggerated demands prevented its participation. If the enterprise failed and if the Serbs were overwhelmed, was it not mainly because of Greece, who refused to fulfil her engagements as an ally towards Serbia and is allowing her territory to be surrounded by the armies of her most furious enemy ?

As to the Gallipoli enterprise, the official documents reproduced above show as plainly as possible that this passage in the " reply " was an outrage on the truth. So also with the Greco-Serb Treaty, of which the Quai d'Orsay persistently kept back the text in order to be able to make baseless charges against Greece.

Anyone who to-day reads this interview is bound to recognize the rigorous logic and the absolute justice of the appeal by which King Constantine sought to gain neutral sympathy for his country. As for the " reply ", it was a chain of sophisms and insincere statements, aimed at confusing opinion, at falsifying facts, and at suppressing the truth.

## V

At the beginning of January there was talk at the Quai d'Orsay of an attempt on the Piræus with a view to an Allied occupation of Athens ; the " neutralist " King was to be expelled and M. Venizelos forcibly placed in power ; Greece was thus to be turned into an ally by main force !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An official at the Quai d'Orsay spoke of these projects to the author of this book at the beginning of January, 1916.

It is probable that M. Briand, who rarely had the courage to resist the excessive zeal of his subordinates, would have consented to this shady proceeding if he had not feared British and Russian opposition.

Towards the middle of January a group of Greek profiteers established in England and France, and closely bound by the tie of a lucrative war trade to these two countries, met in congress in Paris. They arrogated to themselves the title of representatives of all the Greek colonies or communities in the world, and in the name of their material interests—which had exceedingly little to do with those of Greece—made a show of intense patriotic emotion, and sent virtually a command to the Greek Government to enter the war at once on the side of the Entente.

The existence of this congress would have passed unperceived if French propaganda had not thought fit to use it as a supplementary means of defaming the rulers of Greece, who, faithful to their mandate from the people, were refusing to abandon neutrality.

On 21st January M. Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd that Briand had returned from London well satisfied :—<sup>1</sup>

The British have not only renounced the evacuation of Salonica, but are even showing readiness to send reinforcements if necessary. Finally, the question was discussed at London of the occupation of Crete. French naval circles are demanding this, but King George is against it, considering that it is unwise to go too far.

## VI

At the beginning of February the Italian Government sent to Corfu a detachment of carabiniers, on the pretext of taking part in the reorganization of the Montenegrin and Serb troops. The truth of the matter was that the Rome Government had always coveted this island, and that it was disturbed by the presence there of French troops<sup>2</sup>; it hoped by having its flag on the spot to acquire a possible title for territorial demands. This decision aroused great indignation

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Declarations of Bosdari to Demidov, Russian White Book, telegram from Athens, 15th January, 1916.

in Greece. On 7th February M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Legation in Rome :—

Please see Baron Sonnino urgently and tell him that the Government cannot possibly accept the landing of Italian forces in Corfu, and that in view of the public irritation already manifested it cannot answer for the consequences that may result

Baron Sonnino replied first that it was the size of the French contingents landed at Corfu that had accounted for the dispatch of Italian forces. The discussion dragged on and was complicated by the agitation produced in Greece. The Baron cut it short by giving to understand in Athens that in international affairs the small nations are always in the wrong. However, M. Skouloudis' stand had the result that the Italian detachment ultimately amounted only to fifty men.

## VII

After conspiring against the King of the Hellenes and working for a rupture with "priest-ridden" Greece, General Sarrail left for Athens to smooth away the friction.<sup>1</sup> He made no attempt, however, to profit by the goodwill which he found at Athens ; he had a morbid prejudice against Greece of which he would not rid himself at any price, in spite of the instructions which he had received from M. Briand, and of which the text was communicated to M. Politis by M. Guillemin on 18th February.<sup>2</sup> This is clear from the report which he sent to Paris on his return from Athens on 28th February. After attributing devilish double-dealing to almost everyone he met in Athens, he concluded with this incoherent passage :

To sum up, I have the definite impression that the Prime Minister and the general staff were, are, and will continue to be for Germany ; that the King wants to remain neutral and to avoid every incident with us which might endanger his position or have a repercussion in Greece and that he will observe neutrality—benevolent, malevolent, or real.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Greek archives.

<sup>3</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 102.

The Greek impression of Sarrail's visit differed greatly from that of the General, as the official telegrams show. M. Skouloudis telegraphed on 24th February to the Greek Legation in Paris :

The audience granted by His Majesty the King had the character of a purely military conversation, and left an excellent impression on both sides

In the course of the visit which General Sarrail paid on 21st February to M. Skouloudis, accompanied by the French Minister,<sup>1</sup> the General complained of the ill-will of the subordinate Greek officials, and especially of a police superintendent whose men were spying on the movements of the Allied spies. The General then gave it to be understood that if the Greek army withdrew from the Drama-Cavalla region he would not only at once occupy this region himself, but would be forced to expel the civil population ! M. Skouloudis indicated the main grievances of Greece against the Allies, especially in regard to the frequent arbitrary arrests made on Greek territory, and expressed the opinion that if the Allied authorities considered certain persons to be undesirables it would be preferable that they should inform the Greek authorities, who would see to the prompt expulsion of the persons in question. General Sarrail said that he accepted this arrangement, which would eliminate one of the most irritating sources of friction with Greece. But though he agreed to this arrangement, the General never put it into practice.

## VIII

At this period persons intimately associated with M. Venizelos went on a "semi-official" mission to Paris to denounce their country before the French people and Government. Among other charges they brought was that of provisioning German submarines ! It was a doubly abominable action, since the gesture was repugnant and the charge a gratuitous falsehood. The consequence was that certain good intentions in Government circles in Paris at this

<sup>1</sup> Greek archives.

time came up against the strange obstacle of anti-Greek propaganda shamelessly carried on in Paris by Greeks.

The responsibility of M. Venizelos in this matter is considerable, for both before and after his return to power he was constantly accusing his political opponents of " perfidy " towards the Entente. Was he not heard to affirm that German submarines had been provisioned by Greece, even after French and Allied authorities had formally admitted their error in this regard ? In February, 1916, however, M. Venizelos had not yet openly declared war on his King. He was dissimulating his action. Thus, on 18th February, the *Temps* published an interview with M. Venizelos in the course of which he said :—

I have never either planned or even desired a change of regime in Greece. I have not even desired a change of dynasty, seeing no advantage in it for my country. It may suit the purpose of my opponents to accuse me of fomenting plots against the regime or even against the person of the King. It would be impossible for them to quote a sentence or a single word of mine to support their lying statements. The King himself can have no doubt on this point I have already declared to him in unmistakable language my belief that Greek democracy still needs royalty and will do so for a century or two to come.

These words of M. Venizelos were in flagrant contradiction of his acts then, before then, and afterwards. Was it not he who telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay on 31st December, 1915, through the French Legation in Athens, his offer to make " a terrible revolution and shatter the King ? " Was it not he who accepted money from abroad without blushing, to sap the foundations of his country ? Here is the telegram which Demidov sent to Petrograd on 21st February (Russian White Book, telegram from Athens, No. 106) :—

I learn very confidentially from a reliable source that the French Government has just placed at Venizelos' disposal the sum of two million francs for propaganda in the Greek army

This telegram is borne out by one in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay, signed Turot, from the French Legation in Athens, dated 26th April, 1916 :—

Impossible to buy the *Embos* out of the two million francs, which have already been allocated. A supplementary grant is necessary. No account of the expenditure must be asked either of Venizelos or Averov, this would risk ruffling them greatly.

Foreign Governments, however, did not give away their money for simple love of Hellenism, and in accepting their money Venizelos was working for the moral and material destruction of his unfortunate country.

## IX

On 12th February Sir Francis Elliot called on M. Skouloudis to complain again of the surveillance exercised by the Greek police over the "secret agents" of his Legation, and of the publication by certain papers not only of the movements but of the names of these agents, who were liable to be "discouraged" thereby. Be it noted that these "secret agents" were enrolled from the scum of the Greek population. M. Skouloudis replied to the British Minister that the Government had no connexion whatever with these publications. He added :—

But I am bound to say to you that the Greek Government is greatly shocked at the spectacle of a foreign police at work in the heart of Athens. Its indignation is shared by the whole of the population, which explains the insistence of certain papers on publishing the movements and the names of your agents. Only your reiterated assurances that the activities of these agents are not directed against the State have prevented me from taking legal action against them.<sup>1</sup>

On 22nd March M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Minister in Paris :—

Your telegram No. 158. Please tell M. Briand that I am surprised to find him making his own the specious arguments of the Entente Ministers in Athens. I have always declared that the complaint of tolerance of the alleged organization of a police force by Baron Schenk could not be gone into so long as no proofs were offered. I have frequently asked the Entente Ministers to give me a single instance of police action attributable to Baron Schenk;

<sup>1</sup> Greek archives.

they have never been able to do so Yet there cannot fail to be evidence if it was the German police which forced the Allies to organize a police force in turn—a force which is only nominally secret and does not hesitate to subsidize the dregs of the population and to commit such acts as the kidnapping described in my telegram No. 2439, acts which certainly do no honour to great civilized Powers. Baron Schenk's activities are confined to the Press, but in this field it does not seem that the Entente agents, and especially the directors of a certain recently founded agency, have any reason to envy him<sup>1</sup>

On the 27th M. Skouloudis telegraphed again to the Greek Legation in Paris :—

In reply to your telegram of 18th February, the French naval authorities are continuing, in spite of M de Margerie's promise, to act more arbitrarily than ever in Greek waters and along Greek shores. Tell M Briand that not a day passes without French detachments landing in one or another of our ports, and making arrests or breaking into shops or private houses in the effort, always vain, to discover stores of benzine.

There followed a long list of outrages committed by French detachments in Greek ports.

On the 31st M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Paris and London Legations :—

I must draw attention to certain acts on the part of the British and French military and naval authorities which give the impression that they are obstinately trying to influence the population against the regime.

This attitude is hardly reconcilable with the reiterated declarations of the Entente Ministers in Athens that their Governments have no intention to interfere in Greek internal politics Please raise this matter with the Minister of Foreign Affairs The following are the main facts Recently the British Legation asked us to recognize as consul at Drama Mr. Hoyland, who, instead of confining himself to his consular functions, is inciting the population to revolt against the established regime, through a number of propaganda agents These facts have been proved by a judicial inquiry In Patras and Corfu the Allied naval authorities are arresting various Greek or belligerent persons in spite of the promise given to us at the time of the visit of General Sarrail to Athens that "undesirables" should

<sup>1</sup> The Radio Agency, specially founded for propaganda in Greece.

in future be got rid of through the agency of the Greek authorities. In Candia the Allied squadron has proceeded to a blockade of this port *with no reason given*. Finally, all the steamers *requisitioned* and serving as military transports are being searched by the Allied fleet in the neighbourhood of the Piræus. These searches carried out in the *closed waters* of the Kingdom and on board vessels *in the service of the State*, constitute acts contrary to international law and evidencing a spirit of hostility and persecution

SKOULLOUDIS.

On 3rd April the Greek Minister in Paris telegraphed to Athens that in reply to his representations M. Briand had said that he disapproved of the incidents in Patras, which had taken place without his knowledge, but that he approved of the arrests of Greek subjects in Salonica, Corfu, and the islands, since they were "in the service" of German propaganda and spreading false news. It should be noted that at this period every allusion to German successes on the eastern front was called "false news". M. Briand also described as "hostile to the Entente" and consequently under proscription the *neutralist* Greek papers. For the rest, M. Briand and M. de Margerie contented themselves with vague phrases.

These Allied descents on the Greek shores and islands multiplied alarmingly at this period. The zeal of the Allied authorities was stimulated by false information supplied by the adventurers and Venizelists in their service. Almost every one of these descents was followed by grandiloquent telegrams spread by the propaganda service throughout the world, describing the alleged discovery of formidable plots against the Allies! It is true that twenty-four hours later one found no further mention of them. But the bad impression had been created and remained, since the censors permitted no denial. So this mass of absurd tales ended by maddening even clear-headed persons, especially in France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Caracciolo, formerly Italian military attaché in Athens, gives in his book *L'Intervento della Grecia nella guerra mondiale* (Maghone, Rome, 1925) a very interesting account of the violent action of France and Britain in Greece at this period.

## X

On 14th March General Falkenhayn telegraphed to the German military attaché in Athens :—

Warn the Greek general staff that to secure our positions we are obliged to push forward German troops, supported by Bulgarian troops, in the next few days to the line Kale-Bazeri-Vetrina-Mount Tsengel. This is a purely defensive measure, which must on no account come to the knowledge of our enemies

VON FALKENHAYN.

On the 16th, the date on which the Skouloudis Government received this communication, Germany had not officially replied to the telegram from the Athens Government of 22nd December, stating the conditions on which Greece would tolerate activities of the Central Powers on her territory. Accordingly, M. Skouloudis replied on 19th March to Captain Falkenhausen, the German military attaché in Athens, reiterating his rigid demands of December. On the 23rd General Falkenhayn telegraphed to the German military attaché at Athens the following reply to M. Skouloudis, which the latter received on the 24th :—

The Greek Government must understand that in making war with the support of allies we cannot undertake to exclude them partly or wholly from certain war operations. . . Such undertakings are, moreover, impossible to apply in practice. Accordingly we are desisting for the time being from our intention of crossing the Greek frontiers . . .

VON FALKENHAYN.

On 2nd April the Greek general staff communicated to the German military attaché its lively satisfaction at the abandonment by the Central Powers of their proposed offensive in Macedonia.

The reason why Germany abandoned the idea of an offensive against Salonica is indicated in General Falkenhayn's book :—

The idea of attacking Salonica had been given up in March. . . . It remained of more advantage in regard to the general conduct of the war to have some 200,000 or 300,000 of the enemy immobilized

in this distant region, rather than throw them back on the French theatre of war<sup>1</sup>

At the end of March M. Skouloudis had sent an energetic protest to Berlin after the bombardment of Salonica by German aircraft, and had demanded that Germany should renounce this method of warfare. M. Theotokis telegraphed on 30th March to the Athens Government that Herr Rosenberg had said to him :—

This action is not directed against Greece, but against the enemies of Germany on Greek territory      But if the Greek Government presents the matter in this way, the Imperial Government, which has shown up to the present a great deal of sympathy for the special situation of Greece and its consequences, might fairly ask in turn whether the tolerated presence of British and French in the islands and Salonica, the forcible kidnapping of German consuls and citizens in various Greek towns, the last case occurring only yesterday,— whether the toleration of all these things by the Greek Government does not constitute an unfriendly course of action on Greece's part towards Germany

It will be observed once more that, contrary to the belief at the time in France and Britain, there were often sharp exchanges between Greece and the Central Powers.

<sup>1</sup> French edition, translated by General Niessel, *Le Commandement supérieur de l'Armée allemande en 1914-16*, pp. 198-9

## CHAPTER VIII

### SKOULLOUDIS MINISTRY (CONCLUSION)

(April—June, 1916)

The Russian Sacks affair—Transportation of the Serbian army from Corfu to Salonica—Beginning of M. Venizelos' big subversive campaign—Events which led to the German-Bulgarian occupation of Rupel—Action of the Allies in the Rupel affair· Diplomatic documents , M. Skouloudis' resignation , Allies' ultimatum to Greece.—Remarks on the policy of the Skouloudis cabinet

#### I

At the beginning of April an unfortunate incident, unduly exploited, swelled the mass of suspicion against Greece already entertained by the French and the Allies.

Misrepresentation having become the principal weapon of the Venizelists against their political opponents, the *Patris*, the official organ of M. Venizelos, published for the delectation of foreigners a “sensational revelation”. It announced that the Entente Ministers had protested to the Greek Government in regard to the delivery to Bulgaria by the Greek authorities of 37,775 Russian sacks which had been stored at Salonica since the outbreak of the war. The sacks had been requisitioned soon afterwards for the use of the Greek army. But, in spite of this, said the *Patris*, they had been clandestinely removed to Sofia, with the connivance of the Greek authorities. The Venizelist newspaper further published, as confirmation, a telegram dated 8th November, 1915, which, it alleged, Passarov, the Bulgarian Minister in Athens, had sent to Sofia, compromising M. Gounaris, the Minister of the Interior. These statements astonished the members of the Skouloudis cabinet. They had no knowledge whatever of the matter. On

5th April M. Skouloudis said to three Entente Ministers at Athens<sup>1</sup> :—

I am absolutely convinced that it is impossible for M. Gounaris to have said the things attributed to him in Passarov's telegram. In any case, neither M. Gounaris nor myself can be held responsible for whatever M. Passarov, or others, might think fit to telegraph to their governments, unless you submit proof of the accuracy of the contents of these telegrams. I am holding a strict inquiry into this affair and will reply shortly.

On 15th April, at the conclusion of the inquiry, M. Skouloudis gave a detailed account of the affair to the Greek Chamber. After giving proof that there had been no exportation of sacks to Bulgaria with the co-operation or knowledge of any authority, he continued :—

Moreover, the supervision of the Greek inspector at Salonica, who is himself controlled by the British agents under our special agreement with Britain, makes it out of the question for any secret exportation to Bulgaria to take place.

Finally, I have just received the following telegram : "In the storehouses of the Excise Officer at Salonica there are 70,000 sacks left there by the Turks when they surrendered the town." If it had been our intention to send supplies to Bulgaria we could have used these sacks instead of the ones whose existence was well known to the Entente Legations.

This precise and clear statement put an end to the incident as far as the chancelleries of the Allies were concerned. But the effect on the Press was different. Some Paris newspapers published fragments of the speech sandwiched between ironic or malevolent comments, with the result that public opinion was misled and incensed.

## II

On 5th April Sir F. Elliot and M. Guillemin paid a visit to M. Skouloudis. M. Guillemin was the spokesman. He began by assuring M. Skouloudis that nothing grave had arisen. Then he said<sup>1</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> Greek archives.

I understand, M<sup>e</sup> le President, that you would be pleased to be relieved of our presence at Corfu. But if we are to leave Corfu the Serbs must leave first. There are two routes by which they might be conveyed to Salonica, by sea or by land. The first is uncontestedly the easier, but, in view of the recent exceptional activity of the German submarines in the Mediterranean, and the dangers that arise in consequence, our governments have instructed us to inform you that they have decided to transport the Serbian army (100,000 men) by sea from Corfu to Patras, thence by railway to Athens, and from Athens to Salonica by the railway via Larissa.

M. Skouloudis, who was greatly disturbed at the nature and the tone of this communication, replied severely :—

No, gentlemen, Greece refuses to agree to this method of transporting the Serbian army. To transport 100,000 men by railway from Patras to Salonica would entail the interruption for some months of all communications in Greece, the suspension of our social, economic, and political life, in a word, the abolition of the State. What you are asking is simply and purely the abolition of our sovereignty, of our independence and existence as a nation; it is the most flagrant violation of our neutrality, because, if we agreed, your enemies would have good reason to consider that we had ceased to be neutral. I do not mention the danger to our public health from epidemics. No, gentlemen, I reply officially that we can never permit this transport across our territory.

To this M. Guillemin replied :—

We were not instructed by our governments to ask for the authorization of Greece but to communicate their decision to you.

To this arrogant speech, not at all in accordance with M. Guillemin's instructions, M. Skouloudis replied vigorously :

I tell you that if this is so the Government is resolved to tear up the railway lines. You have left nothing untouched in this country; we have no longer any liberty, any national honour, or even the right to live as we wish to in our own homes. Do not forget, however that everything, even submission, has its limits. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

"But the Serbian army has no hostile designs against Greece," replied M. Guillemin. "Britain and France are ready to give you every guarantee. And the sanitary condition of Serbia is perfect."

"Two months ago, at the time of the Serbian landing at Corfu, you gave me a similar assurance, but that did not prevent the population of the island from being decimated by cholera and typhus," retorted M. Skouloudis.

"Then I am to understand," said M. Guillemin, "that you definitely refuse? Are you sure that Parliament and the country share your point of view?"

"I am quite sure," replied M. Skouloudis. "Moreover, were there the slightest indication that the country thought otherwise I should retire. I should be very glad to do so, for my office is anything but a sinecure."

Seeing that M. Guillemin was compromising the situation still further by his brusqueness, Sir Francis Elliot came to the rescue and asked M. Skouloudis quietly if he would give the same refusal to the Serbs' passage by way of the Corinthian canal. M. Skouloudis, impressed by the courteous manner of Sir Francis, and eager to show himself accommodating as far as possible, replied that he would like to consult his colleagues before replying on this last point. The categorical refusal which M. Skouloudis had given in this matter was entirely justified, because:—

1. The Greek railway system was only fit for very light traffic; from Patras to Athens there was a single narrow gauge line; from Athens to Salonica there was a normal gauge line just finished, but it was still only a single line, and its usefulness was limited because as yet it was unable to bear heavy trains. In these circumstances the transport of the Serbs would have taken longer than two months, during which time the whole internal life of the country, including its means of food-supply, must have been at a standstill.

2. The Germans, as they made clear in Athens soon afterwards, would have considered, and with justice, that such a concession to the Entente, far from the coast and right in the heart of the country, would have constituted a *voluntary* default by Greece in her neutrality.

On 8th April the English and French Ministers sent a note to M. Skouloudis informing him that "for pressing reasons of naval security, it had been deemed necessary to place a cordon at the entrance to the Bay of Argostoli".

Henceforward this was the consecrated Allied formula—"Necessity knows no law"—used to justify the incessant violations of international law at the expense of Greece.

On 9th April Sir F. Elliot and M. Guillemin went to M. Skouloudis to explain their reason for occupying Argostoli.<sup>1</sup> M. Skouloudis protested strongly against this fresh violation of Greek sovereignty, which seemed the less justifiable, from a naval point of view, since Argostoli is in the immediate neighbourhood of Corfu, which had now been transformed by the Allies into a very powerful base. He added:—

It seems to me that the occupation of Argostoli is actuated by motives which you dare not yet disclose, that you intend to control the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth, with the idea of landing Serbs at Patras.

The two ministers remained silent, and M. Skouloudis proceeded indignantly:—

As you do not reply I realize that my suspicions are well founded. Very well, gentlemen, with reference to our interview of four days ago, I have consulted my colleagues about the transport of the Serbs and I am instructed to inform you that we are determined not to allow this passage either by land or sea, and to make our decision effective, if necessary, by pulling up the railway lines and blocking the Corinthian canal.

Obviously you can, if you wish, occupy the whole of Greece by force. But the demand you have just made is a monstrous attempt to force us from that neutrality to which the people, the Government, and the King intend to adhere. Gentlemen, despite the lively sympathy that we feel for the Serbs, I must regretfully inform you that our refusal is definite and final.

"The declaration which you have just made," replied Sir Francis, "is the most serious we have yet had from you."

"It is no more serious than your preposterous demand," retorted M. Skouloudis.

On 10th April the Greek Minister in Paris telegraphed to Athens:—

I have the honour to inform you that the Government's refusal to allow facilities for the passage across our territory of the Serbian army, communicated to the Ministry some days ago, has disposed

<sup>1</sup> Greek archives.

the French Government very unfavourably towards us M. Briand has informed me that, under these circumstances, there can be no further question of granting us the advance of 150 millions for which we asked. The papers, notably the *Echo de Paris* and the *Information*, are publishing very violent articles against us. They are suggesting a blockade and other coercive measures on account of the "general attitude" of Greece, for they avoid all mention of the Serbian transport question

The last phrase of this dispatch is significant. The inspired Press was so doubtful of the legitimacy of its grievances that it dared not mention the reason for its campaign !

On 11th April M. Skouloudis replied to the Greek Minister in Paris :—

I can only say that I am painfully surprised by M. Briand's declaration that, in view of the Greek Government's attitude concerning the passage of the Serbian army, there can be no further question of the promised advance of 150 millions We certainly did not ask for this advance as the price for violation of our neutrality, and nothing in our attitude could have given the French Government the right to read such a meaning into our request. We appealed for financial assistance from the Western Powers, thinking that our military and economic weakness could not be a matter of indifference to them Their acceptance in principle confirmed our belief The question of the transport of the Serbs could not alter the financial aspect of affairs, unless it is part of M. Briand's intention to inflict a sort of punishment on Greece for her refusal to allow a grave violation of her neutrality This idea is so iniquitous that surely a clear-sighted and liberal mind like M. Briand's is incapable of entertaining it

It is a fact, however, that the Entente made use of the promise of a loan to Greece—a loan constantly postponed—in order to exercise permanent political pressure over her. France was actively encouraged in this course by the intrigues of M. Venizelos. Here is an instance :—

The French Legation at Athens telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay, on 1st April, 1916, that according to a rumour circulating in Athens, Briand had, during a dinner with Prince George, promised a loan to Greece, and that Venizelos on learning this had shown extreme anger. He instructed

M. Turot to send the following message, secretly, on his behalf, to the Quai d'Orsay :—

I simply cannot credit this news, for such weakness would be the most cruel condemnation of an entire policy. In January, 1915, France advanced me 20 millions, saying that I was not to expect in the future any further financial help. What will be said if, in April, 1916, a Minister who is actively and avowedly a pro-German should be granted what was refused to me ? I should be obliged to declare publicly that the Allies preferred the politics of the king and M. Skouloudis to mine !

As the condition of the Greek exchequer had by this time become alarming, Greece felt obliged to turn a second time to Germany and to ask Berlin for the financial help which Paris and London had refused. On 20th April the Berlin Government informed Athens that it had just placed a sum of 40,000,000 marks at the Bleichroeder Bank to the credit of the National Bank of Greece, on the same conditions as the former loan. The 20th of April, when this financial operation was concluded, is a date to be remembered. It was thirty-five days before the Rupel affair, of which more will be said later. It reduces to nonsense, therefore, the malevolent assertion that this loan was the *quid pro quo* for the surrender of this fort to the Germans and Bulgarians.

On 18th April the French Legation at Athens telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay, still over the signature of M. Turot, although no one knows exactly why : “The King is a madman who ought to be confined. He is a dangerous lunatic !” and M. Turot added the following declarations which Venizelos had instructed him to convey to M. Briand :—

If you are attacked by the Greeks I will launch the revolution. With me are 80 per cent of the soldiers, the majority of the officers, and nearly all the people.

As events were to prove not long afterwards, M. Venizelos had coolly inverted the proportions.

It is of interest to refer here to two of Isvolsky's dispatches.

The first dated 17th April and addressed to Petrograd, read<sup>1</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

J. Cambon informs me that in view of the refusal of Skouloudis to authorize the overland transport of the Serbian army, and his generally lukewarm attitude, the French Government consider that economic pressure on Greece by means of a severe blockade is indispensable.

French Government circles consider that this would excite great discontent in Greece and bring about the fall of the Skouloudis cabinet.

Next day, the 18th, Isvolsky telegraphed<sup>1</sup> :—

J Cambon informs me that London refuses to consent to a blockade of Greece it would lead to Greek demobilization, which England wishes to avoid.

On 29th April the Greek Minister in London wrote to Athens that in the absence of Sir Edward Grey he had been received by Lord Crewe.

Lord Crewe told me that he has received from the British Minister at Athens the substance of your reply, and that he appreciates its reasonableness . . He informed me that the considerations advanced by Your Excellency will be carefully examined, and asked me whether the route via the Gulf of Corinth and the canal will also be objected to by the Greek Government, in his opinion it should be possible to agree to this compromise. I replied that I would not fail to submit the proposal to you.

It will be seen from this reply how considerate was the tone of the Foreign Office compared with that of the Quai d'Orsay.

On 1st May M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Minister in London :—

Please see Lord Crewe urgently and tell him that his proposal is in perfect accord with our feelings in the matter, since I myself recently suggested it to Sir Francis Elliot and recommended it to you in my telegram No 3761 We therefore willingly agree to his proposal in order to escape the grave inconvenience of an overland passage, which public opinion would not tolerate. Please inform Lord Crewe also that we count on the British Government's spirit of equity and moderation to recall its Allies<sup>2</sup> to a better mood towards us, and to spare our country the calamities which might result from such injustice.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

<sup>2</sup> The French Government.

On 3rd May the Greek Minister in Paris telegraphed that the Quai d'Orsay was showing opposition to Lord Crewe's conciliatory attitude.

On 4th May the Greek Minister at Petrograd telegraphed that the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs had just informed him that he had telegraphed Paris recommending a moderate and accommodating attitude in the matter of the transport of the Serbs.

Early in May General Sarrail occupied Florina. His control of Western Macedonia now entirely isolated Greece on the continental side. As usual the Athens Government was not informed of this latest attack on its sovereignty until after the blow had fallen.

The refusal of Britain and Russia to associate themselves with these unwarranted coercive measures against Greece provoked sharp anger in Paris. This was plainly to be read between the lines in the newspapers, and its influence was evident in M. Briand's singular warning to the Greek Minister in Paris (Romanos, telegram to Athens, 10th May) that it would be disastrous for Greece if any ship conveying Serbs to Salonica were torpedoed. Finally, on the next day, 11th May, Athens was informed that Lord Crewe had definitely accepted the Greek proposal to allow Serbian convoys to proceed through the Gulf of Corinth and the Straits of Eubœa. The incident was closed.

On 29th May the manœuvre was completed : 100,000 men had been transported to Salonica with all their equipment, without suffering the slightest loss during the journey. This remarkable operation was achieved by Admiral Dartige du Fournet. He had had to fight not only against hostile submarines, but also, and above all, against the false information with which M. Roqueseuil daily adorned his dispatches, throwing the Allied naval services into confusion.

As for our Intelligence Service (writes Admiral du Fournet), trawlers, barges, tankers, everything was reported as submarines. It was an unending stream of the most naive *canards*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Dartige du Fournet, *op cit*, p 85.

## III

In April M. Venizelos decided to throw off his apparent reserve and openly to declare himself against his country's policy of neutrality. It was a time when the people of every neutral country were being drawn by their fear of the disasters of war to give unquestioning support to their governments, however indifferent these might be. But M. Venizelos thought otherwise. His campaign had this unexpected element—it was addressed not to his fellow-countrymen, to convert them to support of the war, but to Allied public and government opinion, by way of indictment of his own country's Government. He denounced it as a "defaulter" with regard to Serbia; as a "violator" of the Greek constitution, "guaranteed by these Powers"; as having terrorized the Greek people in order to prevent them from "acclaiming" the war, and finally as having infringed the promise of "benevolent neutrality" given to the Entente!

M. Venizelos' tactics were plain; to come into power at the head of a popular agitation in favour of intervention would have been impossible, for the nation regarded all war with horror. He therefore conceived the plan of exploiting the war needs of the Allies at his country's expense in order to obtain from them the elevation to power in Greece which the Greek nation refused him.

Needless to say, the Entente Powers—or France, to be more precise—eagerly welcomed this foreigner who was serving their ends so well. It was a time of grave anxiety; no sign as yet of victory; Sarrail's army in forced inactivity; soldiers were needed at all costs, and now Venizelos was offering Greek soldiers as cannon-fodder, asking nothing in return but that France should help him to seize the reins in Athens and break his political opponents. Why refuse their services to this notable Greek? From the French standpoint there was no stumbling-block other than considerations of justice and morality, and in war these are passed over.

M. Venizelos had just started a paper in Athens called the *Kirix*. Its articles filled Greece with indignation, but were accorded enormous publicity in France and even in Britain.

At the beginning of April the Cretan made a passionate attack in his paper on the policy of his country's Government.<sup>1</sup> He wrote :—

It was our duty to remain loyal to the obligations imposed on us by our treaty of alliance with Serbia. We should never have allowed the Serbians to be overwhelmed by the Bulgarians, who, I am certain, would never have dared to draw the sword if they had not been sure that we should remain neutral. In our blindness we have preferred to violate the Constitution in order to go the way that leads to the abyss.

Everyone knows to-day how false these two accusations were. Further on he wrote :—

By fighting alongside the nations who had always been her defenders Greece might have turned the scales of victory on the Balkan front, and, from a victory which was almost certain, have derived incalculable advantages.

Events after the war have revealed M. Venizelos' immense error. The Great Powers, as always, forgot the weak ; these "incalculable advantages" took the form of indifference, suspicion and even hostility to which the Cretan politician was personally subjected by France particularly, to a certain extent even in the negotiations for the Treaty of Sèvres, but more especially at the Lausanne Conference.

On 30th April M. Turot handed to the Quai d'Orsay a report in which he declared in the name and on behalf of M. Venizelos :—

Venizelos maintains that the Entente's policy in the East will come to grief if it is doubted for a moment that the King of Greece, the Greek Government, and the Greek general staff are the allies of Germany. It is necessary to bring intimidation and force to bear on them.

M. Venizelos, contrary to the general view of him, was exceedingly changeable and full of inconsistencies. No sooner had he accused the King of being pro-German and of undermining the Constitution—the greatest of insults to a constitutional monarch—than he made this declaration to M. G. de Maizière<sup>2</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 11th April, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> See *L'Information*, 11th May, 1916.

If I were to launch a revolution which deprived the country of its sovereign and its dynastic institutions, I would not give myself a year before a counter-revolution came to drag my body through the streets. If circumstances call me to resume office it will only be with the King and on his side.

M. Venizelos thus foresaw the inevitable reaction, but he ignored it. And in the end he narrowly escaped assassination, and suffered a crushing electoral defeat in 1920 at the hands of the nation which he plunged into the horrors of war.

The Paris papers profited by what the *Temps* called "The resumption of the Venizelist campaign" to make endless new charges against Greece, and to decorate M. Venizelos with fresh coronals. On 19th April the *Temps* wrote in its *Bulletin du Jour* :—

The agents of Baron von Schenk, recruited from every grade of the Athenian population, felt powerless to counterbalance the effect produced by the resumption of the Venizelist campaign. It was therefore decided to put an end to it by violence, and the police of M. Gounaris seem to have agreed on this with Germany's men.

The truth was the very opposite of this. It was M. Turot's Greek agents who had organized "Venizelist" demonstrations; and they came into collision with the populace, who did not want war at any price. The proof is furnished in a telegram from the French legation in Athens to the Quai d'Orsay, dated 11th April, 1916, which states over M. Turot's signature: *The recent Venizelist demonstrations in Athens did not cost us much; only 10,000 frs. [sic].*

In his report of 30th April, already referred to, M. Turot outlined to the Quai d'Orsay a romantic scheme whereby twenty men should abduct King Constantine and take him on board a warship!

#### IV

We now come to one of the most sensational events of the Greek affair. Rupel was a little frontier fort, a temporary and improvised work, erected by the Greeks in the Strymon gorge, north of Demir-Hissar, and intended to hold up a possible Bulgarian surprise attack until the arrival of the mass of the Greek army.

This preliminary explanation is necessary to refute the report circulated *ad nauseam* at the time—all over the world—that Rupel was a formidable fortress, a “second Verdun”. Except for its important strategic situation, Rupel, considered from the technical point of view, was insignificant.

The reinforcements from the west which Sarrail’s army was receiving fairly regularly; the addition of 100,000 Serbs by which it had been strengthened; the constant occupation of Greek islands and ports in support of the Entente’s policy of pressure on Greece; and finally, the recent occupation of Florina and Western Macedonia by Sarrail, without opposition from Greece—all this began to cause anxiety at German Headquarters. Besides the coast of Greece, the whole of her Continental frontier, with the exception of the eccentric and isolated prolongation which formed Eastern Macedonia (East of the Strymon) was occupied by Sarrail.

In spite of the numerous vexations and humiliations which General Sarrail continually inflicted on Greece, the Greek Government would have much preferred to see the Allies in Eastern Macedonia rather than the Bulgarians. That is why, as soon as the German plans were realized, Athens conceived it her duty to warn General Sarrail and to advise him to occupy Rupel, the northern gate of Eastern Macedonia, before the Germans and Bulgarians arrived there.

This is how General Sarrail refers to this warning<sup>1</sup> :—

There remained Rupel, quite outside our zone of action. With the weak effectives at my disposal I could not think of doing at Rupel what I had done at Dova-Tepe. Whether to know what I meant to do about it or whether to impute to my failure to do anything the occupation of this point by the Bulgarians, Greek officers came and talked to me about the military importance of this fort for covering and defending Eastern Macedonia.

Whatever phraseology may be adopted by General Sarrail, he admits none the less explicitly that he was duly warned, and in good time, of the German plan, by the Greeks “of Constantine and Skouloudis”. If General Sarrail saw nothing but a “trap” in this friendly warning, he is but the more

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 104.

guilty of inconceivable levity. As regards the pretended insufficiency of his effectives, it is only necessary to recall the recent arrival of 100,000 Serbs. These admissions by Sarrai himself definitely dispose of his accusations concerning a prior agreement between Greece and Germany.

On 9th May, German G.H.Q. delivered the following Note in Athens through the military attaché<sup>1</sup> :—

Military reasons indicate the absolute necessity of making sure of the Rupel defile on account of the advance of British troops on the east bank of the Strymon . Consequently, an advance of Bulgarian and German troops will very shortly take place approximately on the line Kale-Barizi-Vetrina-Tsengel-Dag-Anasselitsa

..

On the next day, 10th May, M. Skouloudis telegraphed as follows to the Greek Minister in Berlin :—

Please insist upon the following to the Imperial Government, in order to secure the abandonment of this projected advance :—

(1) Neither British nor French troops have crossed the Strymon , only small patrols are on the east bank. Thus the principal reason for the measure proposed by German G.H.Q is non-existent ..

(2) The frequent excesses committed by the Bulgarians, wherever they have crossed our frontier, have produced throughout Greece such irritation and distrust that in the event of a Bulgarian invasion the Greek Government could not assume responsibility for the inevitable outburst of public opinion.

(3) The carrying out of the proposed step will render the Hellenic Government completely powerless to oppose possible counter-measures by the Entente, which might be much more injurious to Germany and her allies than the possession of the defensive line which they seek Among other things, the Entente would not shrink from bringing about a forcible change of Government, with a view to a change in the country's policy. .

SKOULoudIS.

On 12th May M. Theotokis, the Greek Minister in Berlin, replied to Athens :—

<sup>1</sup> This communication was dated from German G.H.Q., 7th May.

... Yesterday and to-day I had long interviews with the Department concerning the Rupel defile, and I exerted myself, in conformity with your orders, to convince the Department that political necessities ought to cause the abandonment by G H Q of its plan of occupying the regions in question. The Department has intervened in this direction with General Falkenhayn. Unfortunately the General, in spite of all arguments of a political character, appears to insist absolutely on the imperious necessity which obliges him, for strategic reasons, to proceed to the defensive occupation announced.

M. Theotokis added that, according to Falkenhayn, the Entente was preparing an offensive against which the occupation of Rupel was a safeguard, and, lastly, that von Jagow was powerless in face of the decision of the soldiers. On the other hand, he reported that, as regards the guarantees to be offered to Greece, he had found von Jagow well disposed, but that the latter must first come to an understanding with G.H.Q. He concluded by saying :—

I am struggling against the difficulties raised by the military. The idea of the occupation of Rupel was not suggested by the Bulgarians; it is due to Mackensen's initiative

On 12th May General von Falkenhayn telegraphed to the German military attaché in Athens :—

The statement that there are only cavalry patrols on the East bank of the Strymon is incorrect. According to repeated reports, there are East of the Strymon very strong sections of English cavalry, a regiment of cavalry with sections at Demur-Hissar and Krussovo. Serres is also occupied by the British.

... I cannot conceive why our advance, which is exclusively directed against the Entente, should produce irritation in Greece, at a moment when the Entente is establishing itself there more solidly every day, without the slightest consideration for Greece . . .

VON FALKENHAYN.

On the same day von Falkenhayn telegraphed again to the military attaché in Athens :—

The French thrust on the other side of the Krussian hills, combined with the British movements already announced, make the occupation of the line laid down in my previous telegram absolutely indispensable.

Ask the Greek G H Q to issue the necessary orders at once to the Greek troops, so that they may retire before our advance guards, as agreed. Thus all incidents will be avoided.

On 13th May M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Minister in Berlin :—

We have again been approached to-day by the German military attaché in the name of General von Falkenhayn, with a view to the German occupation of the Rupel defile. I am obliged again to request you to press once more upon the German Government the reasons which compel the Greek Government to insist on its previous demand for this occupation to be cancelled. It is a simple defensive measure which might just as well be taken beyond our frontier. The news of the occupation of Serres and of the presence of British troops East of the Strymon, which is advanced as the reason for the measure in question, is quite incorrect.

M. Skouloudis again vigorously demanded the indispensable preliminary guarantees for which Greece had asked some time previously, as the condition of any German-Bulgarian action in Greek territory. He concluded :—

Please approach Herr von Jagow and beg him to spare Greece the very grave difficulties in which she would be placed if the military measures in question were carried out in the present circumstances.

On 15th May M. Skouloudis received from the Greek Minister in Berlin the following telegram, dated the previous day :—

Herr von Jagow communicates to me the following reply from General von Falkenhayn. "In view of the offensive movements of the Entente which are in progress, an advance to secure the Rupel defile can no longer be delayed. Please inform the Greek Minister, so that the Greek troops may be warned in time." I have replied to this communication by setting forth the considerations contained in your telegrams.

Herr von Jagow drew up with me a fresh telegram to send to General Headquarters. I again drew attention, amongst other arguments, to the immense difficulties, from an internal point of view, which this advance would make for the present Government, and the important weapon that it would place in the hands of Venizelos. . . .

From the telegram of the Chief of Staff to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have ascertained that the General shows a good deal of animosity against us, and that he is complaining that while we allow full liberty to the Entente, who take full advantage of it, to improve their positions daily, we are raising the greatest difficulties at Germany's slightest request.

THEOTOKIS

This last appreciation by von Falkenhayn shows the sincerity of Greece's benevolent neutrality towards the Entente.

On 16th May M. Skouloudis telegraphed to M. Theotokis :—

The absence, up to the present moment, of the guarantees which we asked from Germany some time ago, in view of the possibility of such an occupation, aggravates the situation in a very dangerous manner

On 18th May M. Theotokis telegraphed to Athens that General von Falkenhayn had agreed, in consequence of his urgent representations, to examine the Eastern situation afresh with Mackensen before coming to a definite decision in regard to the Rupel defile.

From this moment, M. Skouloudis received no further communications from Germany until the evening of 23rd May, when von Mirbach, the German Minister in Athens, brought him the following Note :—

(Secret )

ATHENS, May 9th/22nd, 1916.

To the Prime Minister.

In consequence of offensive measures recently taken by the Entente troops, Germany and her allies are obliged to enter Greek territory in order to ensure free passage of the very important Rupel defile. It is only a defensive measure, provoked solely by the movements of the armed forces of the Entente, and it will be kept within the limits set by purely military interests.

Holding this view, the Imperial German Government has not the slightest hesitation in giving the Royal Hellenic Government the following assurances :—

(1) The territorial integrity of the Kingdom will be absolutely respected

(2) The Allied troops will evacuate Greek territory as soon as the military reasons which dictate the action have ceased to exist.

- (3) Greek sovereignty will be respected
- (4) Individual liberty, property, and established religious freedom will be respected
- (5) Any damage occasioned by the German troops during their stay in Greek territory will be compensated
- (6) The Allies will conduct themselves in an entirely friendly manner towards the population of the country

MIRBACH.

A few minutes later the Bulgarian Minister brought M. Skouloudis an identical Note.

M. Skouloudis, alarmed at the grave turn which events were taking, felt that Greece was urgently interested in at once accepting the German guarantees, lest he should see the Central Powers penetrate Greek territory with no guarantees given, which would have been doubly disastrous. With this aim in view, he thought it wise to renounce any immediate protest, which might have irritated Germany and caused the withdrawal of the guarantees offered without preventing the invasion. He contented himself, in replying to the German and Bulgarian Ministers on the next day, 23rd May, with merely *noting* the assurances contained in the two communications, but refraining from any comment or declaration which might compromise Greece's future liberty of action.

M. Skouloudis asked the German and Bulgarian Ministers why their Note bore the heading Secret. They replied that it was by order of German G.H.Q.: the Entente was not to know that the occupation of Rupel was for a purely defensive object.

As has been seen, the Skouloudis Cabinet had left nothing undone during nearly seven months to dissuade the Germans from penetrating into Greek territory. But it had the misfortune, this time, to be met with a *non possumus* from Germany. The Athens Government had long before given instructions to the military authorities in Macedonia that, in the event of a foreign army appearing before the Greek lines, they were to retire to positions already designated. This was from fear of an accidental collision which might become a general action and draw Greece into the war against her will.

These instructions were maintained until April, 1916. On 10th May, as the Athens Government intended to obtain precise guarantees from the Central Powers before they entered Greek territory, an order was given to the Greek frontier authorities in Macedonia to oppose the entry of any foreign army and to state that such entry must first be negotiated between the respective Governments. It was in consequence of these arrangements that the German and Bulgarian Ministers supplied the Greek Government with the guarantees enumerated in their Note of 22nd May.

The tone of this Note, as well as von Mirbach's verbal explanations to M. Skouloudis, clearly proved that for reasons of military security Germany had irrevocably resolved to occupy the Rupel defile, even at the price of a rupture with Greece. But could the Greek rulers assume a similar responsibility? In May, 1916, there were as yet no indications that the Entente would win. The armies of the Central Powers were almost intact both morally and materially. The Germans were still encamped at Noyon. No one could yet in the least foresee the entry into the war of America, whose immense material contribution weighed down the balance. Not many days before the Rupel incident President Wilson, in a widely reported declaration to American journalists, had said: "Americans . . . have nothing to do with the present quarrel . . . The present quarrel has carried those engaged in it so far that they cannot be held to the ordinary standards of responsibility . . . Since the rest of the world is mad, why should we not simply refuse to have anything to do with the rest of the world?"<sup>1</sup> In these conditions, the Greek rulers were not only entitled but bound in duty to their country to consider that for the moment neutrality must be maintained *at all costs*. This is what M. Skouloudis, after mature reflection, did.

When, on 26th May, a German-Bulgarian detachment attempted to approach Rupel, the Greek battalion which was guarding the fort opened fire, in accordance with the orders of 10th May. The enemy immediately halted, without

<sup>1</sup> See the *Temps* of 23rd May, and the *Homme Enchaîné* of 24th May, 1916, for vehement attacks on Mr Wilson for trying to remain "neutral in face of crime".

returning the fire. But the German commander notified the Greek commander that if Rupel was not evacuated in the night of 26th–27th May, it would be occupied by force. That night the Athens Government, realizing that resistance would mean war, and consequently the abandonment of the policy of neutrality which, in its opinion, constituted the best safeguard of Greek interests, ordered the commander of Rupel (1) to cease resistance, (2) to protest vigorously to the German military authorities against the invasion, and (3) to inform them that the Greek garrison would remove the whole of its stores. The Greek garrison evacuated the fort on 27th May, twenty-four hours after the first appearance of the Germans and Bulgarians on Greek territory.

All this shows clearly that there was never any agreement, secret or otherwise, between Greece and Germany, whatever may have been pretended at the time by the calumniators of King Constantine and of M. Skouloudis. A sudden military emergency alone determined Mackensen's unexpected decision to occupy Rupel. Neither the Greek archives, which M. Venizelos thoroughly searched on his accession to power, nor the Berlin archives, whose contents are now public knowledge, have revealed the least indication of an agreement on this subject between Greece and Germany.

When, in 1917, foreign bayonets had placed M. Venizelos at the head of the Hellenic Government, instead of seeking by a wise and intelligent policy to calm his fellow citizens, whose liberties he had outraged, he had the effrontery to drag his political opponents into the High Court. He sought to be revenged primarily on the octogenarian M. Skouloudis, whose wisdom and entire devotion to his country no one in Greece questioned. The principal count in the accusation against the ex-Premier was the failure to resist by force of arms the German-Bulgarian irruption into the Rupel defile. Yet without M. Venizelos' formal invitations the Allies would never have encamped in Greek Macedonia, and the Central Powers would not have felt the need of occupying Rupel.

## V

We have said that on 22nd May—on the delivery of the German and Bulgarian Notes—M. Skouloudis had feared the

risks of making a protest. On 27th May, the Rupel pass having been occupied by the Central Powers, he considered that he ought to wait no longer, and on that day he dispatched a vehement protest to the Greek Ministers in Berlin, Vienna, and Sofia :—

In face of the excitement produced by this invasion both among the inhabitants of the regions invaded and among the public throughout Greece, the Greek Government must address the strongest protest to the Imperial German Government and its allies, and must insist on orders being given for the earliest evacuation of the Greek territory invaded by the German and Bulgarian troops

Please proceed without delay to make urgent representations in the above sense to the Government to which you are accredited. and inform me of the result

On 29th May the Greek Minister in Berlin replied to M. Skouloudis :—

In reply to your telegram I have the honour to inform you that Herr von Jagow has replied to me that this measure of defence was judged necessary by the German High Command, since the troops of the Entente, using the neutral territory of Greece as a base, are undertaking from that base offensive operations in Serbian territory against the Allies, who for their safety have been forced to secure the pass in question.

On 28th May M. Skouloudis had telegraphed to the Greek Legations in Paris, London, Rome, Petrograd, and Berne, to inform the Governments to which they were accredited of the invasion of the Rupel pass by the Central Power, and to acquaint them of the protest and demand for immediate evacuation formulated by Greece.

On 2nd June the Greek Minister in Petrograd telegraphed to Athens that coercive measures against Greece were in contemplation. On the same day Paul Cambon telegraphed from London to the Quai d'Orsay with regard to Venizelos' offer to attempt a pronunciamento under Allied protection : Lord Crewe, he said, had definitely refused to agree to this, and had given Sir F. Elliot instructions not to encourage Venizelos in this line of action. On the same 2nd June, M. Guillemin telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay that "after all the Rupel incident was not to be regretted", and he added :—

Count no longer on Greece. If we need the Greek army for our offensive, it is only Venizelos who can give it to us. But that statesman can only return to power through a civil and military revolution, especially a military one, and this *will not succeed without our support*

GUILLEMIN

This telegram confirms the fact that all the philhellenism and admiration for Venizelos displayed in French quarters was a mere manœuvre with a view to forward the Greek cannon fodder.

On 3rd June M. Skouloudis communicated to the Greek Legation in Paris the surprise which he felt at Greece being blamed, in face of her resolve to remain neutral, for having accepted from the Central Powers the same guarantee of integrity and restitution of her occupied territories as the Entente had previously given.

Still less do we understand the objection made to our passive attitude in face of the invasion of our territory by the Germans and Bulgarians, and the complaint of the alleged abandonment of our policy of benevolent neutrality.

The Entente Powers were informed of our intentions from the first, and our policy has been only too well explained to them many times over. On November 4th/17th (telegram No. 12,118) we declared to them through you that they cannot fail to understand that the widest and most sincere benevolence has limits beyond which the maintenance of neutrality becomes impossible, and that a country which means to remain neutral must be careful not to transgress those limits. In particular, as regards the entry of their enemies into our territory, the Entente Powers were notified, in declarations repeated over and over again for six months, that we should not oppose it. M. Briand must not forget that when, last November, he suggested that we should warn the Bulgarians with an energy calculated to stop them at our frontiers, "we hastened to inform him that, in our condition of neutrality, which we definitely mean to maintain, we could only use firm language in the event of the retirement of the expeditionary force on Salonica ending in its re-embarkation (telegram No. 12,500, November 16th-29th). When the Allies resolved to remain at Salonica, we had to arrive at an understanding with them on the questions raised by their occupation, and it was clearly understood that "if the Allied troops by their

movements brought the war into our territory, the Greek armies would retire so as to leave the two sides a free field to fight it out" (telegram No 12,948, November 27th). So that it is contrary to the truth to insinuate that conditions in Macedonia have changed through the fault of Greece. The charge is merely an unnecessary pretext for claiming in Macedonia a liberty of action which has in fact never been lacking to the Allied armies.

To-day, at the very moment when preparations were being made at Salonica to celebrate the official *Te Deum* on the occasion of the King's name day, General Sarrail has proclaimed martial law, and occupied various parts of the town, including the prefecture, the post and telegraph offices, the police station, and the state railways. The chiefs of the gendarmerie and police have been expelled. General Sarrail gave no previous notice of this to General Moschopoulos (Greek military commander at Salonica).

Please acquaint M. Briand of the above, and express to him the very great surprise of the Greek Government that measures of such gravity have been taken without the least previous notification being given, if only as a matter of simple courtesy, and taken at the very hour when the official ceremony of the King's fête day was to take place.

You should make the strongest protest in the name of the Greek Government against these grave infringements of our sovereignty in despite of the arrangement of November 27th, referred to above, as to the conditions under which the Allies are in Salonica.

On 2nd June, the *Petit Parisien*, which was then semi-official, had published this paragraph:—

It is believed that the Allied Powers are discussing the opportunities of more energetic joint action at Athens. It appears clear that the occupation of the frontier forts has been effected in full accord between the Hellenic Government and the Governments of the Central Powers. This constitutes a grave failure to keep the promises made to the Entente by the Skouloudis, Gounaris, and Zaimis Cabinets.

This paragraph showed the specious argument which was to serve as a pretext for striking at a little neutral country.

The Greek chargé d'affaires in Paris, after handing to M. Briand the Note from the Government at Athens dated 3rd June, informed M. Skouloudis on 6th June that the evident meaning of M. Briand's reply was that Greece was

subjected to the "sanction" of the proclamation by Sarrail of a state of siege in Macedonia because she persisted in wishing to remain neutral, and that M. Briand, haunted by the fear of an advance of the Central Powers into Eastern Macedonia, was trying to frighten Greece by talking of the formidable measures which in that case Sarrail would be obliged to take for the security of his troops.

On 6th June M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek legations in Paris, London, Rome, and Petrograd :—

Please take the opportunity of your first interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to renew the official assurance that it is absolutely false that the German and Bulgarian troops have taken possession of Rupel as a result of any agreement whatever with us. On the contrary, the garrison at first opposed their advance by force, and it was only after their commanding officer had declared to the commandant of our fort that if he did not retire during the night Rupel would be taken by force, that the Government, in order to avoid an armed conflict which would have resulted in Greece ~~alors d'ailleurs~~ <sup>à la suite de</sup> her neutrality, ordered the position to be evacuated. You will add that the Entente Governments must not allow themselves to be deceived by these calumnious manœuvres, ~~... et avec~~ with my predecessors and I have had to struggle.

And M. Skouloudis enumerated several of the absurd accusations previously directed against Greece, accusations of the foolishness of which the Allied Governments had on each occasion been finally convinced.

On 5th June, in his address to the Chamber, M. Skouloudis related with meticulous precision the details of the occupation of Rupel, and protested indignantly against the perfidiously spread rumours of a secret understanding between the Central Powers and Greece.

The publication of this speech, from reading which the French public might have corrected its opinion, was forbidden by the Allied censorship, and the Paris Press unanimously opened an extremely violent campaign against Greece; the truth was stifled!

At the same time, General Sarrail and the French fleet in Greece forbade, *without giving any reason*, any sailings of the Greek mercantile marine. For a country largely consisting of islands, the blow was terrible. Legally and

morally the measure was inexcusable ; our modern civilization does not permit an accused person to be condemned not only without a hearing but even without giving the reason for his condemnation !

On 7th June M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Legation in Paris the news of the blockade inflicted upon Greece, and added :—

. . . These measures, if they are not immediately withdrawn, will simply have the result of starving the population of the Kingdom, and particularly of the islands We cannot believe that France intends to take vengeance in this fashion on Greece, who, as an independent country, has the incontestable right, formally recognized by the Powers themselves, to remain neutral

The fear which M. Briand appears to have of being tricked by Greece, as his predecessor was by Bulgaria, appears to me so illogical that I cannot believe that it is the motive of the measures taken against us Even if he did not believe the official denials by the Royal Government of the alleged agreement between Greece and the Central Powers ; even if he deliberately passed over our most solemn assurances that we would never lift our little finger against the Allied armies, he knows too well that our geographical position makes us absolutely dependent on the Entente, and that it would be materially impossible for us to commit ourselves to the policy of treachery against France and her Allies followed by Bulgaria.

Please make it your urgent duty to see M. Briand and convey the above to him

On the same day M. Skouloudis again telegraphed to the Greek Legations in Paris, London, Rome, and Petrograd :—

I hasten to inform you that the steps taken to blockade our coasts are being extended in such a manner as to inspire extreme alarm From to-day the stoppage of the vessels transporting foodstuffs to various points of the Kingdom reduces to the deepest want several of our provinces, in which we shall run the risk of having to mourn cases of death from starvation, as in Epirus

The Greek Government is also anxious about the fate of the army, for which it is directly responsible If the grain vessels at present in the Mediterranean are prevented from concluding their voyage, the army of the capital would in ten days be entirely deprived of bread The danger is yet more imminent for our Macedonian troops, who

are living almost from hand to mouth and have received no consignments from us since yesterday. By the end of this week they will be literally reduced to famine.

In this situation, the gravity of which I cannot sufficiently stress, please see the Minister of Foreign Affairs without delay, represent to him in energetic terms the indignation which the Greek Government feels in presence of inhuman measures applied with no plausible motive and with a severity that nothing can explain, and declare to him that Greece throws forthwith upon the Entente Powers the entire responsibility for the consequences, and particularly for the possible deaths and for the situation which may result from the desperate acts to which our starving armies may be driven if the blockade is not raised without delay. You will add that the Entente is, from now on, morally responsible before the civilized world.

On 8th June the Greek Minister in London telegraphed to Athens that the departure of all Greek ships anchored in the ports of the United Kingdom had been forbidden. On the same day he sent another telegram to Athens :—

I have communicated the contents of your telegrams to the Under-Secretary of State. I have stressed the gravity of the measures taken against us, and have asked him to explain to me what is the object of them and what is demanded of us. He replied that before making any answer he must consult Sir Edward Grey, who returns this evening.

This reply of the Foreign Office demonstrates the incoherence which reigned in the councils of the Entente.

On the same day Isvolsky telegraphed from Paris to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Cambon has just read me a telegram from Athens from Guillemin, proposing a plan of action against Greece, the details of which he has elaborated with the British and Russian Ministers, the Italian Minister being of a different opinion. This plan has the character of an ultimatum, and covers such demands as the replacement of the present Cabinet by a business Cabinet, the dissolution of the Chamber, and demobilization. These demands are to be accompanied by the dispatch of squadrons to Salomica, Patras, and Volo, and by a landing at the Piræus.

I conclude from the conversation which I have just had with Briand that he is an advocate of the most energetic measures against

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

Greece, but is faced with British opposition. He is going to London to-morrow evening and will try to get the British Government to waive its objections.

On 9th June the Greek Minister in London telegraphed that the British Under-Secretary of State had replied to his protests against the blockade :—

As to the steps taken in Greek waters, the British Government is at present in active communication with the French Government in order to determine the object and extent of these measures.

In other words, penalties were first inflicted and then the “object” of these penalties was discussed !

On 10th June the Greek Minister in Rome telegraphed confidentially to Athens :—

Baron Sonnino told me that he would have understood any strategic measures necessary to the security of the Allied armies in Macedonia, but that the measures actually taken appeared to him unjustified and without practical object : the author of these measures—France—does not say what she wants, which is inconceivable.

These confidences of Baron Sonnino’s are worth remembering.

On the same day Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, telegraphed to Petrograd giving an account of the conference which Briand, Joffre, Roques, and Clémentel had just had with the British Ministers and the Allied Ambassadors :—

The proposal to demand from Greece the resignation of the present Cabinet was rejected. It was considered that it would be an unjustifiable interference in the internal affairs of the country, and would produce a deplorable impression on Greek opinion, making impossible the formation of a durable Ministry.

Benckendorff telegraphed to Petrograd later in the day that after the conference the following telegram had been sent to the Allied Ministers in Athens, through the medium of France<sup>1</sup> :—

It is indispensable that the Greek people and Government should be informed of the reason of the measures taken by the Allies against

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

their country. The Powers are in possession of a number of proofs confirming their suspicions of the present Cabinet, whose conduct is incompatible with the - - of legal neutrality (*sic*). The Powers do not for a moment demand that Greece shall depart from her neutrality, they occupied Salonica on the formal and repeated request of the Greek Government. It is beyond doubt that that occupation has rendered a valuable service to Greece, for otherwise Salonica would by now have been occupied by the Bulgarians.

The entry of the Bulgarians into Greek territory and the occupation of the Rupel fort constitute a menace to the Allied armies, and impose on the Protecting Powers, the guarantors of Hellenic independence, the obligation of insisting on measures [interruption] which will assure tranquillity and peace to the Greek people.

The Powers are contenting themselves with merely demanding a formal declaration that a state of siege will not be proclaimed in Greece, for in that case they would have no guarantee of the dismissal of the police officials whose conduct appears to be dictated from without and of the continuation of demobilization.

Hand this note to M. Skouloudis in company with your British and Russian colleagues, and afterwards please give it wide publicity

BRIAND.

On 11th June M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Legations in the Entente capitals :—

You have doubtless been informed by the Press of the demobilization which has just been decreed. Please bring the fact officially to the notice of the Government to which you are accredited, and add that the demobilization of twelve classes, with considerable grants of leave to the reservists of eight other classes, is a prelude to general demobilization.

You may add a personal expression of hope that the Powers will see in this measure an incontestable proof that Greece, who has never had any intention of aggression against them, nourishes no hostile thoughts, and that henceforward the ridiculous rumours so industriously circulated on the subject of an understanding between Greece and the Central Powers deserve no credence whatever.

This demobilization was considered in London, Rome, and Petrograd as certain proof of the absence of any hostile inclination on the part of Greece against the Entente. In Paris it was understood in the same sense, but since the only thought of Paris was to draw Greece into the war, this

shrewd step by M. Skouloudis provoked increased anger against him. The Press burst into a fresh delirium of violence.

This irritation is evidenced in the telegram in which the Greek chargé d'affaires in Paris informed Athens of the communication of the above message to the Quai d'Orsay on 12th June.

M J Cambon, who appeared to receive my communication with satisfaction, told me that there is something else remaining to be asked of the Greek Government: he spoke of the intrigues of the Athenian police.

Another pretext had already been found in Paris for continuing the insidious campaign against Greece.

On the same day Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup>:

Cambon has read to me a telegram from the French Minister in Athens, which protests strongly against the insufficiency of the demands to be presented to Greece. He insists that the resignation of the present Cabinet should be demanded, and that Skouloudis, Rallis, and Gounaris should henceforward be excluded from power.

On the other hand, the British Ambassador announced to-day in Paris that Grey is opposed to the modifications which the Allied Ministers in Athens wanted to make in the Note to be handed to the Greek Government, and particularly in Articles 2 and 3.

On 13th June the Greek Minister in London telegraphed that, from what the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had told him, he concluded that Britain had contributed powerfully to moderate the action proposed by France and Russia against Greece.

On the same day Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup>:

The British Government has consented only to the modification of Article 1 of the Note elaborated in London. It insists particularly that mention shall be made therein of the fact that it was Venizelos who invited the Allied armies to Greece. But this fact, which does not appear in the official correspondence, would compromise Venizelos and serve as a weapon against him in the hands of the present Greek Government, which accuses him of high treason. Moreover, such a revelation would entirely alienate our Greek partisans from us.

And Demidov complained that Grey objected to any intervention in Greek internal affairs.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

On 14th June M. Skouloudis addressed to Washington and the other neutral States a vehement protest denouncing the treatment meted out to the maritime commerce of Greece by the Powers, in defiance of the principles of law and equity traditionally observed in international relations:—

Since 6th June the Greek coasts have been in a state of limited blockade; all vessels sailing under the Greek flag in Greek waters have been stopped by the Allies, and detained in one of the naval bases arbitrarily established by the belligerents in Greece. . . . At the same time, all Greek ships in Allied ports have been officially prevented from leaving, and those which have been encountered on the high seas taken to Bizerta, to be used for the purposes of the Allies.

Surprised by these proceedings, as sudden as they were arbitrary, the Greek Government hastened to ask the Entente Powers for the reason, but to its amazement it cannot officially obtain any satisfactory explanation. It is none the less certain that we are confronted with an extensive scheme of violent measures of blockade, embargo, and requisition, concerted and put into operation without any previous notice, and without any indication of the object aimed at.

On 14th June Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup>:—

Following Briand's acceptance of the British Government's objections, the French Legation in Athens has received orders to proceed with the delivery by the three Ministers of the Note worked out in London, of which Article 1 alone has been modified.

But we are all three convinced that this Note, as it stands, is not only too moderate, but also very injurious to our interests, since it is, in sum, no more than the one demand for general demobilization. . . . The change of chiefs of police without our consent to the new appointment renders us no service. . . . Finally, in declaring that it was the Greek Government which invited the Allied armies to Salonica, we needlessly furnish the present Ministry with a weapon against Venizelos. . . .

Venizelos, abandoned by us, is much troubled by your insistence—in my opinion quite unjustified—in recalling that it was he who invited the Allied armies. He has asked the British Minister to appeal in his name to Grey's sense of fairness to have this phrase in the Note suppressed, and he asks this not as a favour but as an undeniable right.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

For all these reasons we are in agreement not to deliver this 'Note to Greece, as it is injurious to the interests of the Entente, and to request fresh instructions

We are firmly convinced that it is an urgent matter to demand of Greece total demobilization, replacement of the present Cabinet by a business Cabinet, dissolution of the Chamber, and fresh elections, appointment of the chiefs of police to be subject to our approval, removal from Greece of the German propagandists ..

Could not Your Excellency intervene with the British Government to persuade it to follow a more energetic policy in this respect ?

M. Demidov was at that moment acting under the direct influence of Venizelos, whose real character he did not learn until later, and under whose dictation the three Allied Ministers had drawn up the text of the ultimatum to be handed to Greece by the Entente. On the same day Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Briand informs me that he is more than ever convinced of the necessity of taking energetic action against Greece, but that he is encountering resistance from London, which desires neither to replace the Skouloudis Ministry nor to intervene in the appointment of chiefs of police

A telegram of Isvolsky's<sup>1</sup> dated 15th June throws light on the pressure which M. Briand had been putting on London, and on the arguments which he had used to obtain Grey's acceptance of the text of the Note proposed by the Allied Ministers in Athens :—

Briand informs me that reports have been received from Athens to the effect that, with the knowledge and probably at the instigation of the police, manifestations against the Allies are being organized there. He has instructed the French Ambassador in London to do his utmost to persuade Grey that a Note must be delivered to Greece making radical demands, namely, the replacement of the Ministry and dissolution of the Chamber, and, in support of these demands, a squadron sent to the Piræus.

Sir Edward Grey received at the same time from other sources further and still more completely false news. It was thanks to these fictions, which emanated from the Allied spy service in Athens, that Paris finally succeeded

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

in breaking through the moderation of the British Foreign Office. On 14th June Sir Edward Grey had sent for the Greek Minister in London to make a grave statement to him. The British Government, he said, was now convinced that the Athenian police were under enemy influence, had been fomenting a plot to implicate two members of the British Legation in the incident of the bomb thrown at the Bulgarian Legation, and were threatening to arrest certain British subjects. The Greek Minister, after relating this, added in his dispatch :—

From another source Sir Edward was informed that a Greek officer had published in a newspaper a letter accusing the British Legation of lying, that a demonstration against England had taken place in Athens, and that a part of the crowd had gone to the Legation and had uttered insulting cries in front of the windows without interference from the police. In addition, the British Government is convinced that highly placed personages are acting entirely under the influence and at the instigation of the enemy, while the Germans and Bulgarians are establishing themselves in the Greek forts. Consequently, if the Greek Government has not the power or the will to protect the British Legation against the insults of the police and their associates, the British Government will recall its Minister from Athens, with all the consequences that will involve

On 16th June M. Skouloudis replied to the Greek Minister in London :—

Please see Sir Edward Grey and explain to him that I should be much obliged by a precise statement of the different points which he mentioned to you. If we had definite details of the accusations brought, we should not fail to deal with them at once. The fact that we are given only vague charges apparently based on unconfirmed rumours, gives the impression that pretexts are being sought to bolster up the inexplicable regime of pressure to which Greece finds herself condemned.

On 16th June Benckendorff transmitted to Petrograd a copy of a telegram which Sir Edward Grey had just sent to Sir F. Elliot :—

. . . It is correct to say that without the invitation from Venizelos we should never have sent our armies to Salonica, and I am under the impression that the King must at some time have given his consent.

. . . In the Note to be sent to Greece, which you will draw up in agreement with your colleagues, I should prefer you to insist on the expulsion of von Schenk and the German agents and on the dismissal of the chiefs of police and their replacement by officials in whom we have confidence. A recent incident would explain these demands. If the Greek Government accepted these demands we should be entirely satisfied, and the rest would follow as a matter of course. If, on the other hand, Greece refused, we should have an adequate basis for the formulation of graver demands, such as resignation of the Ministry, fresh elections, etc. . . .

GREY.<sup>1</sup>

On 18th June M. Skouloudis telegraphed to the Greek Minister in London :—

. . . We have exhausted all the official means of persuasion without succeeding, even in England, in getting the justice to which we are sincerely convinced we have an absolute right

. . . Relying on the excellent relations which I established in London with Sir Edward Grey, I believe I can make a direct appeal to his sense of equity. I am convinced that he will accept the following declarations which I beg you to make to him without delay, leaving a copy with him :—

I can give the most formal assurance that our police are not under the influence of the enemies of the Entente, and that enemy agents are not in suspicious touch with highly placed personages here.

There has been no plot against the members of the British Legation, with reference to the incident of the Bulgarian Legation bomb, a matter which is still before the Courts

The letter published by Sub-Lieutenant Horolagas, to rebut certain allegations concerning himself which were contained in a communiqué from the British Legation, was but the exercise of the legal right of reply and contained no insult. Moreover, a judicial inquiry is pending against this officer as regards the incident in which he has been implicated.

It has been officially established that Monday's demonstration in the streets of Athens *was in no way* directed against Britain; not only was no insulting cry uttered against the British Legation, but the crowd did *not even pass* in front of the Legation building.

The information to the contrary which moved Sir Edward Grey can only proceed from premature reports of subordinate agents, whose

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated from the French version.

erroneous statements, forwarded to London without being sufficiently checked, have assumed by repetition the grave character which the British Government must have ascribed to them. I am absolutely persuaded that if the British Government were to proceed to a detailed and purely objective inquiry into the facts alleged, it would arrive at the same conviction as myself, which I affirm in the most formal manner—that great political importance has been attached to a series of insignificant incidents, owing to the exceptional state of nerves brought about by the European war, and more particularly by the inevitable personal conflicts between agents of so many foreign police bodies organized here side by side with the official police of the Greek State. . . .

On 19th June Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> details of the military and naval measures which were to accompany the ultimatum, and reported that Venizelos had been made acquainted with the Allied plan of action, for fear lest he and his principal partisans might be arrested.

On 20th June Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd that, according to the orders given by Paris to M. Guillemin, if Greece did not at once accept the ultimatum,

the Piræus and Phalerum were to be occupied and the Corinth and Chalcis canal bridges destroyed. If that was insufficient, Salamis, after authorization by the Allied Governments, was to be destroyed, the Greek fleet sunk, Athens occupied, the two Greek divisions in Eastern Macedonia isolated, and the Greek division stationed at Salonica disarmed.

On 21st June, M. Skouloudis being absent from the Ministry, the British and French Ministers handed to M. Politis the ultimatum on which, after a fortnight's discussion, the Allies had at last agreed. M. Skouloudis, his strength and patience exhausted, and weary of his long fruitless struggle against falsehood and intrigue, had resigned two days previously. He therefore refused to attend to the open envelope offered to him by M. Politis. He left that to his successor.

The document was as disgraceful in tone as in contents. It opened with a reminder to Greece of the sophism of the "Protecting Powers" and of the alleged legal rights involved

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

for them. Then it had the effrontery to pretend once more that the "Protecting Powers" were not asking Greece to depart from her neutrality.

But they have numerous and legitimate grounds for suspicion against the Greek Government, whose attitude towards them has not been in conformity with its repeated engagements nor even with the principles of a loyal neutrality. Thus the Greek Government has all too often favoured the activities of certain foreigners who have openly striven to lead astray Greek public opinion, to distort the national feeling of Greece, and to create in Hellenic territory hostile organizations which . . . tend to compromise the security of the military and naval forces of the Allies

Greek public opinion was not led astray by anyone; it remained neutral because it judged that to be in its own interests. As for the "hostile organizations", they were, as is known to-day, a legend.

The entrance of Bulgarian forces into Greece and the occupation of Fort Rupel and other strategic points with the connivance of the Hellenic Government, constitute for the Allied troops a new threat which imposes upon the three Powers the obligation of demanding guarantees and immediate measures

Where had the three Powers found the shadow of a proof of the "connivance of the Hellenic Government?"

Furthermore, the Greek Constitution has been disregarded, the free exercise of universal suffrage has been impeded, the Chamber has been dissolved a second time in a period of less than a year, against the clearly expressed will of the people (*sic*). . . . The whole country has been subjected to a system of oppression and of political tyranny, and has been kept in leading strings without regard to the legitimate representations of the Powers. These Powers have not only the right, but also the imperative duty of protesting against such violations of the liberties of which they are the guardians in the eyes of the Greek people.

The hostile attitude of the Hellenic Government towards the Powers who have emancipated Greece from an alien yoke and have secured her independence, and the evident collusion of the present Cabinet with the enemies of these Powers, constitute for them still stronger reasons for acting with firmness in reliance upon the rights which they derive from Treaties. . . .

"The Greek Constitution disregarded," "political tyranny," "hostile attitude," "evident collusion," "the rights which they derive from Treaties," every word a lie. If there had existed an international jurisdiction to which Greece could have appealed, the signatories to this document would have been singularly confounded.

The Protecting Powers of Greece accordingly see themselves compelled to exact immediate application of the following measures :

(1) Real and complete demobilization of the Greek army . . .

(2) Immediate substitution for the existing Ministry of a business Cabinet devoid of any political prejudice and presenting all the necessary guarantees for the application of benevolent neutrality.

(3) Immediate dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies, followed by fresh elections, within the time limits provided by the Constitution, after general demobilization has restored the electoral body to its normal condition

(4) Dismissal, in agreement with the Allied Powers, of certain police officials whose attitude, influenced by foreign guidance, has facilitated the perpetration of notorious assaults upon peaceable citizens, and the insults which have been levelled at the Allied Legations and their members

The ultimatum concluded by saying that "the Protecting Powers leave to the Hellenic Government the entire responsibility for the events which would supervene if their just demands were not immediately accepted". But, probably out of embarrassment, it had been agreed not to call this document an *ultimatum*, but a Note !

We blush to-day in copying this "Note", due to the pen of Venizelos, but signed by Britain, France, and Russia !

The whole nation felt deeply the injustice and the outrage of which it was a victim, but, to avoid worse things yielded all along the line, as becomes the little and the weak.

International relationships know neither police nor law courts. They know only the law of force, which rests latent during happy years like an inert ferment, but in the hour of crisis suddenly and tumultuously resumes its detestable work.

On 30th May M. Guillemin telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay that M. Venizelos had declared to him : "The Rupel affair throws a crude light on the King's policy ; he is in league with Bulgaria and Germany ; he is betraying Greece, he is betraying the Entente ; action is imperative." And M. Venizelos ended by offering to go to Salonica, raise a mutiny in the army, and set up a provisional government there.

Here is a dispatch on the subject from M. Guillemin to General Sarrail, a *secret* dispatch dated from Athens, 1st June, 1916, which throws a lurid light on these machinations :—<sup>1</sup>

. . . My telegram No 232 was sent after a visit which Intendant Bonnier had paid to M. Venizelos, he had just given an account of it. Afterwards I saw the ex-Premier myself and went more closely into the question mentioned to you in a personal letter from Colonel Braquet. I am under the impression that time has been lost, that success is doubtful, and that, especially in view of the Paris telegram . . . you intend to reserve full liberty of action for the measures which you may consider urgent

This dispatch shows that there was constant collusion between M. Venizelos and the French Legation. It was from these clandestine relationships that arose all France's disappointments in the East and all Greece's misfortunes.

General Milne, however, refused to take part in putting Salonica in a state of siege, alleging lack of orders from his Government. Afterwards, out of courtesy, he refused to associate himself with the proclamation of the state of siege on the King's fête day. Finally, on June 7th, he stated that he would rather see the French than the English occupying the Greek custom house. General Sarrail was indignant at these scruples, in which he saw a conspiracy of the British and Greeks against him ! <sup>2</sup>

In his report to Paris on 27th April, General Sarrail had drawn an absurd picture of the situation in Greece. Without the least proof, he wrote :—

The King believes in the strength of Germany ; he is, moreover, probably bound by a convention with the Kaiser ; he is a German, whatever may be said . . .

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 109.

Events took it upon themselves ultimately to refute these ready accusations. But, from the pen of a General Commanding-in-Chief, these fallacious remarks could only make dangerous a political situation already absurd.

## VI

From the official texts quoted in the last three chapters and from the detailed account given of notorious facts, there emerges an impression of the policy of M. Skouloudis singularly different from that which prevailed in France and Britain during the war. M. Skouloudis was represented by propaganda as one of the most formidable enemies of the Entente. To-day, ten years after the war, it is possible to realize that in those tragical hours one of the most dangerous enemies was silence, whether imposed by a mistaken opinion or dictated by the brutal force of the censorship. The events of those days, of which the passage of time has permitted us a better knowledge, lead to this tangible conclusion, which history will consecrate: M. Skouloudis, far from being an enemy of the Entente, rendered it an inestimable service: he delayed for six months the penetration of the Central Powers into Greek Macedonia. He thus permitted General Sarrail to instal himself there without disturbance, to organize there without interference, and consequently to receive reinforcements of men and stores which took months to get to him.

This penetration was prevented, as has been seen, under the Skouloudis Cabinet on three occasions: (1) in December, 1915, after Krivolak; (2) in January, 1916; and (3) in March, 1916.

But on these services, which were not unknown either in Paris or London, it was preferred to keep silent. Silence was similarly kept on the improper extension of the notion of benevolent neutrality which was constantly imposed on Greece, and in which M. Skouloudis each time ended by acquiescing, under protest. Yet these services deserved some recognition! When the Germans, suddenly anxious about their security, occupied the Rupel defile—on the model of the Allies, who for their part had occupied nearly a quarter of neutral Greece—outrries were raised against him, and no

insult was spared him. Yet M. Skouloudis had on this occasion again made immense efforts to dissuade the Germans from their plan. This was known in the councils of the Entente ; it was known, too, that Greece had warned Sarrail of the German plans against Rupel ; but entire ignorance of all this was pretended, and collusion between M. Skouloudis and Germany was assumed, in the hope that the employment of this deceit would enable Greece to be more readily torn from that neutrality which was, in the eyes of Paris, the crime of M. Skouloudis. It was this pacific firmness of M. Skouloudis which, in the war atmosphere in which people were living, let loose sinister passions.

M. Skouloudis, on coming into power, had undertaken never to allow a finger to be lifted against the Entente troops. He kept his word to the end. In taking office despite his advanced age and his renunciation of public life, and that too in order to follow the thankless and thorny policy of neutrality, M. Skouloudis gave a tangible proof of his civic virtues and his patriotic self-denial. His attitude in this respect is in singular contrast to that of M. Venizelos, who, at the moment when Greece, in consternation, became aware of the ultimatum of 21st June, and from end to end of her territory resented the foreign intrusion into her internal affairs, telegraphed to M. Briand :—

The Note solved a situation from which there was no other issue. The just severity of its tone, the sincerity of its motives, its expressly drawn distinction between the Greek people and the ex-Government, give it more than anything else a paternal character towards the people of this country. The protecting Powers have acted only like parents reclaiming a son's birthright.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, a striking proof of the uprightness of M. Skouloudis appeared in the course of the prosecution set on foot against him by order of M. Venizelos in 1917. Actually M. Venizelos, who held office from M. Jonnart and not from the Greek people, claimed to have M. Skouloudis judged by a High Court, in the name of the Greek people, for the crime of high treason !

In August of that year M. Skouloudis, attacked with

<sup>1</sup> See *The Daily Mail*, 24th June, 1916.

monstrous retrospective accusations before the Greek Chamber, illegally resuscitated, sent to the newspaper *Skríp* a long letter in his defence. M. Venizelos had the reproduction of this letter forbidden by the censorship !

During the case M. Venizelos had the law on the responsibility of Ministers modified six times, to the prejudice of M. Skouloudis. More than that : he had a law passed contrary to the fundamental principles of justice, according to which law unsworn depositions and depositions of dead witnesses might be admitted by the High Court !

Lastly, M. Politis, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the illegal Cabinet of M. Venizelos, became, as we have already said, the principal accuser of his old chief, M. Skouloudis. He produced a series of apocryphal dispatches, Turkish, Bulgarian, and Greek, some furnished by "a foreign Power", "whose name could not be revealed", others deciphered by an "excellent young man", equally anonymous. And all intended to prove, by tortuous and inavowable means, that there had been secret machinations against the Allies between M. Skouloudis and Germany, and even, to crown it all, between M. Skouloudis and Ferdinand of Bulgaria !

But this trickery was too patent. When the defending counsel asked for the production of the originals, information as to their source, the key of the cipher, and the name of the translator, the accuser allowed the process to drag on, and this sensational brief vanished like the mists of sunrise, which in full day are dried up and dissipated. Thus the case went on for nearly three years, without result, until the fall of M. Venizelos.

The Greek White Book, published with much ado by M. Venizelos and including all sorts of supplementary matter, did not reveal the slightest offence committed by M. Skouloudis. On the other hand, documents are to be found there which do him credit. Thus there is that telegram of 26th June, a week after his resignation, sent by the Greek Minister at Berlin to King Constantine.<sup>1</sup>

The latest events at home have created an impression here. In general, it is thought that we could do nothing else but give way, although it is considered that we might have yielded on conditions,

<sup>1</sup> *Un Livre Noir*, Document No 17, Lausanne edition, 1918

say, after the evacuation of our territory by the Entente, seeing that actually the elections will take place under the pressure of British and French bayonets . . . but your Majesty's position is thoroughly understood here, and there is no desire to make it more difficult by any advice or claims whatever. There is reason to believe that the people here will accommodate themselves to the new state of affairs .

It is evident from this dispatch that there was nothing which bound Greece to Germany. But at the time, to minds over-excited, the simple fact of exchanging telegrams with Berlin constituted a sort of "crime". It was this psychological state which M. Venizelos adroitly exploited in the hope of ruining his political rivals in the eyes of the Entente.

Finally, the perfect loyalty of M. Skouloudis towards the Entente is indirectly confirmed by Colonel Repington, who wrote in the *Morning Post* of 16th March, 1918, with regard to Greek neutrality :—

We are told by Mr. Bonar Law that his experts advise him that were Germany to possess Greece we could not keep up our communications with Egypt. Why, then, did we go there and *wilfully terminate the strict neutrality which Greece wished and endeavoured to preserve?*

If the "neutralist" counsels of the octogenarian statesman had been listened to, what mourning and what suffering would have been spared to this Near East ! Never would Hellenism have been uprooted in Turkey under the complaisant eye of the "Protecting", but victorious, Powers : never would Greece have known ruin. M. Skouloudis, in sacrificing himself personally to the ideal of peace, offered himself as a holocaust to the spite of the surly spirit of war, which immolated on its altars all those who were not credulous enough to believe in the ideal beatitudes of the post-war Zion, a sort of superterrestrial Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The inaccuracy of the views expressed in regard to M. Skouloudis in the article "Greece", by M. Mavrogordato, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (12th Edition, Volume 31-2), is exposed by the facts brought forward in this book and the official documents adduced in proof of them. History is liable to be falsified when written by those who are insufficiently acquainted with the period with which they are dealing.

## CHAPTER IX

### SECOND ZAIMIS MINISTRY

(*June—September, 1916*)

Zaimis Ministry—Evidence of M. Zaimis before the chairman of the Council of War (1th February, 1919)—Mission of Prince Nicholas and Prince Andrew of Greece to Petrograd and London—German-Bulgarian offensive in Macedonia, invasion of Eastern Macedonia and intervention in Germany of the Fourth Greek Army Corps—Aggressive speech of M. Venizelos at Athens and Venizelist pronunciamento at Salonica—The Allied fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, arrives in sight of Athens—Outrage, arranged by the French naval attaché, against the French Legation in Athens with a view to incriminating Greece—The burning of Tatoi

#### I

King Constantine had charged M. Zaimis to form the new Cabinet on the eve of the delivery of the Note of 21st June. M. Zaimis, after forming a Ministry without any political complexion, accepted all the demands contained in the Note.

It must, however, be pointed out that with the arrival of the Zaimis Cabinet, as under its successors, Greek policy underwent an important evolution. Under the urgent advice of his Ministers, King Constantine began to consider the abandonment of neutrality. The insults, the persecutions, the sufferings of which Greece was the victim at the hands of the Allies, had in the end overcome his resolution to maintain neutrality; he asked himself whether, all things considered, war at the side of the Allies would not be less onerous than a neutrality incessantly undermined by the "Protecting Powers" and by the Greeks in their service. But Constantine and his Ministers could not lose sight of the fact that, up to then, all the small allies of the Entente had been crushed. It was, therefore, of more importance than ever, before entering the war, to take

certain precautions in negotiating with the Entente the conditions of Greece's entry into the war. It was important to know how the Greek contribution could bring the Allies the maximum useful return, and what would be the reward of Greek effort after the victory. On these points, the negotiations could never make headway ; Venizelos was watching ; he was able every time to intrigue in a masterly fashion to cause the rupture of negotiations already disturbed by interallied disagreements.

## II

On 4th February, 1919, M. Zaimis appeared as a witness before the Chairman of the Venizelist council of war, which was instructed to prosecute the adversaries of the Cretan politician. As M. Zaimis did not figure among those adversaries, and, moreover, his loyalty has never been doubted either in the Entente capitals or, above all, by the Venizelists, his testimony is of real importance.

We will, then, take it as a basis for exhibiting the four big questions with which M. Zaimis had to deal during his Ministry : the demobilization, the elections, the Bulgarian irruption into Eastern Macedonia, and his negotiations with Paris and London with a view to the entry of Greece into war at the side of the Entente.

Here is the text of that evidence :—

I had no official intimation whatever of the irruption of the Bulgarians into our territory before it occurred. . .

When I took over the Government on 8th/21st June, 1916, I thought we ought either to accept the Entente Note as it stood, and demobilize, in which case we should run the risk of our territory, stripped of troops, being invaded by the Bulgarians, or else to reject the Entente Note and break with the Allies. If I had adopted the second alternative, it would have been a disaster for the country. For this reason I chose the first . . .

The departure of the Greek army from our frontiers increased my anxieties, and I notified General Sarrail, through the Allied Ministers, that we intended to evacuate certain frontier posts which stood between the armies of the Entente and those of the Central Powers, as well as some detached forts such as Phea Fetra, etc., withdrawing the heavy artillery therefrom. I notified him in order that he might

occupy all these strategic points, lest they should fall into the hands of the Bulgarians. General Sarrail replied that as regards the artillery we must do what was proper, but that regarding the occupation of these fortified points he could not reveal his plan.

This is what General Sarrail wrote on the subject of this friendly notification from M. Zaimis :—

On the other hand, M. Zaimis had the effrontery to ask me whether, faced with the Bulgarian threats, he should disarm the forts. He wanted to place the odium or the ridicule for this measure on me. I did not reply. As in June, in view of the news which I received from Greece, I had been compelled to envisage intervention in Athens. Without orders, I concentrated a brigade and embarked it.

Russians and British then intervened in Athens, in London, in Paris. The brigade remained in harbour. I had it disembarked on 4th September. Everything must have an end<sup>1</sup>.

These few words suffice to show the General's alarming state of mind. Let us continue the evidence of M. Zaimis.

The Government at this moment judged that the situation demanded the revision of our foreign policy, with a view to co-operation with the Entente. I had always been of the opinion that it would be a mistake to abandon neutrality in consequence of a fortuitous incident, without having previously assured ourselves at least of financial assistance and supplies for our army, or being certain that we should be accepted as allies.

*Question*—Do you think that if the Government had categorically declared to the Bulgarians that it would not permit them entrance into Greek territory, that we had decided to resist by force of arms in spite of the weakness of our effectives, do you think that the Bulgarians would have entered just the same, thus themselves provoking the rupture?

*Answer*—I am convinced that the Bulgarians would have entered without troubling themselves about the rupture with Greece which would follow.

*Question*—Do you think that perhaps the Bulgarians had the promise of the General Staff or of King Constantine that they would not be attacked when they penetrated into our territory?

*Answer*.—No such suspicion has ever occurred to me.

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, op. cit., p. 132.

*Question.*—What steps did you take, when you judged that it was important to give a new orientation to the country's foreign policy?

*Answer*—I communicated first with the British Minister here, and then the diplomatic representatives of Greece in Paris and London (with the approval of King Constantine) I told Sir F. Elliot that Greece had to examine her policy afresh; that, certainly, her interest was to range herself on the side of the Entente, but that it was first necessary that she should know whether she would be accepted as an ally, and whether, in that case, she would obtain financial aid and supplies for her army from Britain and France. . . . The British and French Governments replied that they gladly accepted our co-operation,<sup>1</sup> and that they were ready to give Greece their financial support and to procure her all the supplies necessary for her army. The King telegraphed personally to Prince George to inform M. Briand, then Prime Minister, that, under certain conditions, Greece would range herself on the side of the Entente, and leave the settlement of all pending questions until later. . . .

As Premier in a business Cabinet, I considered that I could not depart from the mandate with which I had been entrusted on taking office; I took office solely with a view to applying the stipulations of the Note of 21st June, 1916. One of the conditions of this Note was that of proceeding to parliamentary elections. . . .

When the elections were announced, M. Venizelos recommended that none of the political parties should include neutrality in its programme. I communicated this proposal to the Opposition, who rejected it. At this moment the French Minister, M. Guillemin, asked for the adjournment of the elections *sine die*. To this I, as head of a business Cabinet, could not agree, for it was contrary to the mandate I had received.

Thereupon I tendered my resignation, leaving the diplomatic situation at the point indicated above, that is to say, with parleys going on with the Entente, undertaken with the King's consent. . . . It is within my knowledge that the negotiations continued also with the Kalogeropoulos Ministry which succeeded mine.

M. Zaimis, as his evidence shows, had firmly resolved to go on with the parliamentary elections in accordance with the ultimatum of 21st June. But his efforts were in vain because of a strange reversal of policy: the very men who had signed the

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that they did not say "our alliance".

ultimatum now came to him to insist that the elections should be postponed.

The fact was that when the reservists returned to their homes after demobilization they showed themselves strongly pacific in sentiment ; in their opinion, Greece had everything to lose and nothing to gain from entering the war. These demobilized men, convinced that M. Venizelos was conspiring with the representatives of France against his country, in order to force her into the struggle, conceived for him an implacable hatred ; they formed themselves into Reservist Leagues with the avowed object of presenting a determined opposition to him at the elections. They adopted as their electoral programme the maintenance of neutrality up to the last possible moment ; they proclaimed their refusal to fight, no matter what might happen, unless the war was freely consented to by the country, and unless King Constantine, who was now, on account of his neutralist policy, the most popular man in all Greece, should call them to the colours.

The anti-Venizelist movement, thus given a start, spread throughout Greece with irresistible force. M. Venizelos was deserted by the great majority of his supporters ; the country did not want war and M. Venizelos was the war personified. It was at this juncture that the Cretan, alarmed by his miscalculations, contrived that the Allies should prevent the elections which, at his instigation, they themselves had demanded ! “The question of the dissolution of the Chamber,” wrote Admiral Dartige du Fournet, who was responsible for carrying out the ultimatum of 21st June, “was abandoned—everything pointed to the supposition that the new elections would be unfavourable to the Venizelist party, whose cause was closely bound up with our own.”<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the semi-official newspapers of the Allies united with a sinister Machiavellianism in declaring that the Greek nation wanted to fight, and that Constantine and German propaganda alone prevented it !

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 122.

## III

In July King Constantine agreed with Zaimis to send his two brothers, the Princes Nicholas and Andrew, to Petrograd and London, respectively, where they had close family ties, in order to negotiate with Russia and Britain the entry of Greece into the war. This move, however, of King Constantine's was received with suspicion. In London Prince Andrew was admonished rather than given a hearing. An important official at the Foreign Office, whose only knowledge of the East and of Greece was derived from a Venizelist source, delivered a sort of sermon to the prince on the constitutional "duties" of King Constantine.<sup>1</sup> In Petrograd Prince Nicholas received a better welcome, not, however, on account of the common interests against the Central Powers, but because of Russian distrust of Britain.

In his telegram to Athens of 6th/19th July, 1916, published in M. Venizelos' White Book, M. Theotokis reported his success in allaying the fears aroused in Berlin by the mission of these two princes. This dispatch, which M. Venizelos published as a condemnation of King Constantine, proved, on the contrary, by revealing the uneasiness felt in Berlin, the lack of any collusion between Greece and Germany.

## IV

At this time the August offensive of the Central Powers in Eastern Macedonia extended temporarily as far as the south of Lake Ostrovo, and caused General Sarrail the greatest apprehension. In this connexion it is relevant to recall that on the 17th August, 1916, the Greeks, urged on by the Allies to demobilize quickly, had withdrawn their troops from eighteen villages between Florina and Vodena. As the Serbs were not ready to occupy these villages the Bulgarian advance was facilitated.

On the 17th, also, the German Minister at Athens, and, on the 18th, the Bulgarian Minister, sent to M. Zaimis a Note announcing that a fresh advance by their armies in

<sup>1</sup> For confirmation of these facts, see the Russian White Book (Benckendorff's telegram to Petrograd, 27th July, 1916).

Greek territory was necessary for military reasons. At the same time they reaffirmed the guarantees they had given Greece at the time of the occupation of Rupel. On the 24th the Allied Ministers in Athens, alarmed by the advance of the Central Powers, hastened to M. Zaimis to ask him whether the Greek Government intended this invasion of the country to proceed unchallenged. M. Zaimis gave the obvious reply that any resistance would be incompatible with the total and immediate demobilization demanded by the Entente. The following telegram, sent by Isvolsky from Paris to Petrograd on 26th August, is documentary evidence on this subject.<sup>1</sup>

The Cabinet met to-day in order to discuss Zaimis' declaration that Greece will not oppose the German-Bulgarian invasion, any more than she would oppose the counter-measures which the Entente might take on Greek territory.

They decided to warn Constantine that, if he will not assume the responsibility for preventing this invasion, the Powers will send their fleets to Piræus and occupy Athens. Briard thinks this measure ought to be carried out immediately, if only in the interest of King Constantine and his dynasty. Naturally, however, he will undertake nothing without the consent of all the Allies.

At length, the better to be prepared against any offensive which Sarrail might intend<sup>2</sup> or any Greco-Allied action resulting from the Venizelist agitation, the Germans and Bulgarians, decided to occupy Drama, Serres, and Cavalla, in spite of the agreement entered into with M. Zaimis on 22nd August<sup>3</sup> that their armies should not enter Macedonian towns.

At this time the most astounding rumours concerning the German and Bulgarian occupation of Eastern Macedonia were circulated by Allied propaganda agents, with the help of the Venizelists. The object was, by means of the usual charge of "treachery", to throw the responsibility for the occupation on the Greek Staff and the King; it was not

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgarian communiqué of 20th August concerning Bulgarian activities on Greek territory.

<sup>3</sup> Note from German Minister in Athens to M. Zaimis.

politic to include M. Zaimis, since the Entente themselves had appointed him.

In 1917 M. Venizelos, wishing to have certain of his opponents tried by Court-Martial, instituted an inquiry into this matter; in the course of the proceedings, however, he found it expedient to suppress the records of the case, lest he should compromise his own supporters. From a study of these documents it is easy to reconstruct the events connected with the occupation of Cavalla by the Germans and Bulgarians and with the "enforced stay" of the fourth Greek army corps in Germany.

It should be pointed out that at Cavalla there was no fort, only defensive works in process of construction. The "fortified camp" of Cavalla was merely a fiction. Even so it would have been possible, at the last minute, to improvise a defence if the British naval authorities had lent their support to the Greek garrison. Unfortunately a Venizelist rising took place just at this time in Salonica, and the British admiral compromised the situation by allowing the intrigues of certain friends of M. Venizelos to mislead him. This emerges from the evidence given by Mr. Knox, former British Vice-Consul at Cavalla, in 1919 to the Greek Legation at Bucarest. At this time Cavalla was blockaded from the sea by the British fleet, and on land by the Central Powers. Its situation was certainly paradoxical. The two groups of enemies seemed to be joining forces to attack the neutral town !

When Colonel Khatzopoulos, commander of the Greek troops in Eastern Macedonia, asked Mr. Knox, in accordance with his official instructions, to raise the blockade of Cavalla, so that what remained of the fourth army corps might be transported to the Piræus with its arms and equipment, Mr. Knox promised to do his best with the British admiral. The latter, however, in the hope of forcing the 4th Corps to go to Salonica and swear allegiance to the Venizelist movement, hindered the arrival of the Greek transports. This action on the part of the British admiral angered beyond all measure the great majority of the officers of the 4th Corps, who were determined to remain faithful to their oath.

Meanwhile the Bulgarians, seeing that the Greeks were preparing to leave Cavalla, demanded, under threat of bombardment, the immediate transfer of the 4th Corps to the north. Thus, as a result of the ill-will of the British admiral, the 4th Greek Corps virtually became prisoners of the Bulgarians. Happily for the Greeks the Germans had, a little earlier, offered their hospitality to the 4th Corps if it withdrew towards Drama, within a certain period, until Greek territory was evacuated by the Entente. Colonel Khatzopoulos, realizing that he must choose the lesser of two evils, submitted to the second alternative. All the garrisons of Eastern Macedonia, already isolated by the Central Powers, joined him, and about 6,000 men took the road to Germany. And certainly the Germans did everything possible to secure the well-being of their guests during this "enforced stay". Even after Greece's entry into the war they were not treated as prisoners.

When, a little later, Marshal Hindenburg met Colonel Khatzopoulos in Germany, he said to him: "It was I who gave the order for the occupation of Cavalla. I could not allow you and your soldiers in our lines, because, if Greece enters the war, it will certainly not be on our side." Hindenburg's conclusion was only natural in view of the fact that the Allied Press had made public Greece's overtures to Paris and London in regard to intervention, despite M. Zaimis' request for the utmost secrecy.<sup>1</sup>

In November, 1916, as will be related later, Admiral Lacaze, the French Minister of the Navy, demanded the disarmament of the Greek army. In doing so, he directed Admiral Dartige du Fournet to represent this as a claim for compensation on account of the increased strength which the surrender of the stores of the 4th Corps had given to the Bulgarians. In this connexion Captain Chamonard remarked very justly to the naval commission of the French Chamber, in 1919:—

This ignored the fact that the artillery and the greater part of the arms and ammunition fell into the hands of the Bulgarians at Cavalla solely because the English Admiral Thrusby,

<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, the telegrams from Athens in *The Times* and *Daily Chronicle* of 3rd September, 1916, and Reuter's telegram of 9th September.

whether acting on his own initiative or carrying out the orders of his Government, refused, for a space of 48 hours, to allow the Greeks to embark their troops and equipment. He only consented when it was too late, on the very day when the Bulgarians entered Cavalla.<sup>1</sup>

This unfortunate incident, for which the British naval authorities were responsible, produced further violent press attacks against Greece. To give added importance to the affair the papers omitted to say that this army corps only numbered 6,000 men ; they left it to be inferred that 40,000 Greeks had perpetrated this "new betrayal" !

## V

From the secret negotiations between M. Venizelos and M. Guillemin, dealt with above, it is clear that the Cretan had for a long time been planning a *coup d'état* in his own interest. Disillusioned by his electoral campaign and convinced by it of his own unpopularity, he realized that violence was the only means to his end. In contempt of the popular liberties which he professed to defend, he set himself to seize power, armed only with the support of foreigners. On 27th August, with the support of the Allied propagandists, he organized a "national" demonstration at Athens. As it filed past his house he delivered an inflammatory speech. The following are the chief passages of this speech, which was put into the form of an address to the King, but showed no trace of the slightest attempt to preserve the deference of a subject. Under the guise of a petition to the Crown, M. Venizelos hurled insults at it :—

. . . You are the dupe of your military advisers, who, with a soldier's narrow outlook, and in the hope of setting up an absolutist regime which shall make them masters of the situation, have persuaded you that Germany will emerge victorious from the European war.

You are, finally, the victim of a natural and human weakness, for, accustomed to admire everything German, and overawed by their unparalleled military preparations and their organization, you have not only expected, but desired a German victory, hoping thereby to concentrate power in your own hands and set aside our liberal regime.

<sup>1</sup> For confirmation see Dartige du Fournet, op. cit., p. 151

In this crisis the Zaimis Cabinet failed to perform its duty. M. Zaimis, without the slightest deviation from his strictly legal powers, could have ordered the arrest of M. Venizelos on a charge of making statements which he knew to be libellous and subversive. This course, at any rate, would have been taken by Prime Ministers in the "democratic Western countries". In 1920 the Greek electors replied to these odious charges by rendering justice to King Constantine with an enthusiasm which is well remembered.

At the end of his speech M. Venizelos, feigning a noble self-sacrifice and claiming rights which he did not possess, "authorized" the King to enter the war immediately and give full political powers to the Zaimis Cabinet! He concluded by threatening what would happen if he and his party were not given a hearing.

The tendency and tone of this speech deeply shocked Greek sentiment, but this mattered little to M. Venizelos. He had realized that the Greek nation would never put him in power, and had staged this demonstration for the benefit of the belligerent Powers, through whose support alone he could attain his ambition.

M. Venizelos' campaign had begun; it now followed its course. What, for lack of outside help, he had failed to do at Athens, he attempted at Salonica, under the ægis of General Sarrail. Salonica, which had always declared for neutrality and, on two occasions when it had sent deputations to Athens, had chosen them from the neutralist party, was to become Venizelist in a day. General Sarrail worked this miracle. He has admitted it: "I could have left Venizelism in the void or crushed it before it was born."<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, on 30th August, French motor-cars distributed thousands of manifestos informing the bewildered population of Salonica that they had just risen in revolt against the Athens Government. The manifestos were signed by two lieutenant-colonels and others intimate with M. Venizelos. These had constituted themselves a "Committee of Public Safety". Their programme authorized the seizure of military and civil power and war on the side of the Entente; immediate

<sup>1</sup> "La Grèce Vénizéliste" by Gen. Sarrail, in *Revue de Paris*, 15th Dec., 1919, pp. 689-91

and compulsory mobilization in Macedonia ; and “ relentless punishment of all traitors to the country ”. This last characteristically Venizelist phrase had the merit of fascinating General Sarrail !

In the afternoon of the same day the rebels, commanded by Lieut.-Col. Zymbrakaki, paraded before General Sarrail’s headquarters and formally placed themselves under his command. But in the evening Col. Trikoupis, Chief of Staff of the Third Army Corps, took steps to subdue the insurrection, if need be by force. Sarrail took immediate action and, under the pretext that he could not tolerate disturbances in Salonica, demanded the immediate disarming of the Greek division which had remained faithful. He then sent the division on to Athens. And the General let it be understood that “ he would continue his benevolent neutrality ” towards the Venizelists.<sup>1</sup>

Field-Marshal Haig said at Chantilly at this time, “ Your General brought off the coup.” And this was the view of all the Cabinets and General Headquarters, where it was known that the Venizelists would never have dared to embark on such an adventure.

Everything seems to indicate that Venizelos was in direct contact with Sarrail at this time. From a telegram sent by M. Guillemin to the Quai d’Orsay on 1st September, it appears that the French Legation had nothing to do with the coup of 30th August. He telegraphed that he had tried in vain to restrain Venizelos and persuade him to await the elections. Venizelos, however, feared precisely that one thing—to face an election from which he would never recover.

The Venizelist demonstration of 27th August deeply angered the Athenian population. The next day, the 28th, in spite of the excitement produced by Roumania’s entry into the war, a counter-demonstration was made almost spontaneously. The crowd was much bigger than on the previous day. There were peasants there who had come specially from every part of Greece, and all the fit men of the capital, the reservists, took part in a march-past. It was a truly magnificent spectacle. This enormous crowd ecstatically

<sup>1</sup> *Revue de Paris*, 15th Dec., 1919, p. 693

hailed the constitutional and neutralist King whom the pro-war Venizelos had insulted. This counter-demonstration proved that the campaign energetically carried on by M. Venizelos for two months past had borne no fruit, and that his attacks on the King had only made the King more popular.

## VI

On 26th August the Commander-in-Chief of the French fleet, who was at Malta, received orders to mobilize as quickly as possible a naval force of sufficient strength to bring pressure to bear on Greece and take any action which might be necessary. On the 31st Admiral Dartige du Fournet received instructions to take the special squadron to Salamis and demand —

- (1) Control of the posts and telegraphs,
- (2) The expulsion of Baron von Schenk and his staff,
- (3) The surrender of the enemy ships interned at Eleusis and the Piræus.

On the afternoon of 1st September, the Anglo-French fleet arrived at Keratsini, opposite Salamis. The Allied fleet encountered no resistance ; observation from hydro-planes revealed that the batteries along the coast were unarmed; no mines could be seen, and the Greek fleet was at anchor with fires damped. No resistance was offered when the French admiral seized the thirteen interned Austro-German ships. On the same day Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :

I have asked Briand what the Allied fleet intend to do His reply is that owing to British disapproval it has been decided to abandon the idea of landing, but France has a brigade in reserve in case of emergency . . Briand considers that control of the Greek posts and telegraphs is essential, and that the enemy agents must be expelled. He adds, however, that he does not intend to come to any decision without the agreement of the Allies

Paris had instructed the admiral to act always in agreement with the Allied Ministers. This, however, was scarcely ever possible, each Legation at Athens and each Cabinet having a

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

different point of view regarding Greek affairs. On 9th September Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Confidentially we agree with Sir Francis Elliot that the French are pursuing unwarrantable aims There will be continuous trouble, now that the fleet has arrived

As soon as the fleet arrived at Keratsini, M. de Roquetaillade called for a brigade to occupy Athens and the Piræus, thus dominating all Greece. It was, no doubt, with the idea of meeting this demand that M. Briand tried unsuccessfully to gain British assent to this policy.<sup>2</sup> Early in September Britain recalled most of her warships from Keratsini, considering that she had no reason for interfering in Greece's internal politics.

On 2nd September the Allied Ministers dispatched a note to M. Zaimis. They stated that their Governments had knowledge that information had been leaking through to the enemy and therefore desired to control the posts and telegraphs. They demanded further the immediate expulsion of enemy agents and the punishment of their Greek accomplices. Demidov mentioned in his telegram to Petrograd of 12th September that the list of expulsions presented by M. de Roquetaillade contained the names of two persons long since dead !

Both of these measures were indefensible in principle, and neither had any military justification. The whole of Greece's continental frontier had been made watertight by a wide zone of Allied occupation, strongly defended, and Greece's sea routes were minutely controlled by the Allies. In these circumstances, what practical object could be served by these demands ? Obviously, the seizure of administrative machinery in order to interfere in the internal affairs of the realm.

As for the second demand, it was an astonishing denial of justice: it claimed to establish against Greek subjects on Greek territory a new kind of offence: that of not being of M. Venizelos' party. This monstrous abuse was covered by the pretext of German espionage, which was nothing compared with that of the Allies, inspired by M. Venizelos.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>2</sup> See Isvolsky's telegram of 1st September, 1916, quoted above.

## VII

On 9th September, at 7.45 p.m., a score of agitators made their way into the garden of the French Legation crying, "Long live the King," "Down with France," "Down with Britain!" They fired revolver shots and then disappeared. In Athens there was great excitement, and in Paris immense anger. M. Zaimis made profuse apologies in every direction; he at once ordered a strict inquiry, promised to make an example of the offenders, and arrested the policemen guarding the Legation; but to no purpose. The French authorities in Greece took up a threatening attitude, while the Paris Press loaded Greece with insults. Admiral Dartige du Fournet, acting in good faith, thought it his duty to send a guard of twenty men to protect the Legation. On the following day the Allied Ministers, after conferring with the admiral, deputed Sir Francis Elliot to call on M. Zaimis and present the following demands:—

- (1) Pursuit and condemnation of the guilty persons,
- (2) Punishment of the soldiers and police who had failed to prevent the outrage,
- (3) A written apology to France in the name of the Government.

M. Zaimis agreed at once. The Allied Ministers also asked him to advise the King to issue a proclamation disavowing the outrage committed by "his partisans".

But the Greeks had had no hand in it. This unspeakable affair had been organized and carried out by M. de Roquetaillade, French naval attaché and Head of the S.R.,<sup>1</sup> who had turned *agent provocateur* with the criminal intention of stirring up the Allied Cabinets and making them strike a decisive blow at a little State which obstinately preferred to remain neutral!

The history of this affair is attested by the most complete official documentation. We may quote first from the report presented by the naval commission of the French Chamber, adopted by the latter on 24th September, 1919. This document was placed on the table of the Chamber on this

<sup>1</sup> Intelligence Service

same date, but for obvious reasons the French Government considered it discreet to prevent its publication :—

The day after the arrival of the Allied squadron before Salamis, he (M. de Roquetaillade) did not scruple to telegraph to the Minister of the Navy (telegram of 1st September) that there was no need to be concerned for Greek sovereignty, for there was nothing left in the country to violate

From this moment, as every telegram of his proves, the naval attaché had only one aim and preoccupation—to set on foot violent action against Greece, no matter what abominable means were resorted to to this end. Thus he maintained a force of police, who, all over Greece (for all that it was neutral territory), made arrests of enemy subjects and even of pro-German Greeks,<sup>1</sup> whom he had imprisoned

When the Greek Premier offered some opposition on behalf of certain of these people,<sup>2</sup> too well known, doubtless, to be arrested by M. de Roquetaillade's agents, the naval attaché, in a telegram of 3rd September, protested against these objections and wrote. "The exigencies of war which have brought us to Salonica entail energetic measures before which the judicial system of Greece, which, in any case is already undermined, must make way."

In the same telegram M. de Roquetaillade urged the Minister of the Navy to order a landing of troops, since the mere presence of the fleet at the Piræus and at Salamis had no effect.

But the orders were not given, and the measures demanded by the naval attaché, behind the back of the Admiral Commanding in Chief, were not adopted by the Government. Thus it was necessary to do something to make it impossible for Paris to refuse action any longer. On 9th September a howling mob burst into the gardens of the French Legation, a few fanatics fired revolver shots at M. Guillemin's window, with cries of "Long live the King!" "Down with France and Britain!" (Naval attaché's telegram of 10th September)

The insult offered to our country was serious, M. Guillemin, in reporting the incident to the Prime Minister, considered it "very grave" and thought that it "ought to be followed by reprisals". Some time later, however, it was learnt from the persons arrested that the demonstration had been planned in every particular by the

<sup>1</sup> True pro-Germans were rare in Greece, but it was found helpful to describe every opponent of M. Venizelos and every partisan of neutrality as pro-German.

<sup>2</sup> That is, politicians and ex-Ministers.

naval attaché, with the intention of securing the French Government's approval of the coercive action which he had constantly been advocating. The leaders in this affair—headed by one Bolanis—figured for the most part in the lists of agents of our Intelligence Department. They were arrested in the course of the demonstration, but the naval attaché hastily removed them from pursuit by embarking them on the *Résolu* (his ship) in the uniforms of French sailors. After hiding them on board for three days he sent them to Salonica, where they remained completely at liberty till the naval attaché began to fear their possible revelations. Then, on 25th September, he ordered their arrest, and they were hurried to France for internment, the competent authorities were urged to exercise a rigorous supervision and not to allow them to communicate with anyone at all. Some time after their arrival at Marseilles, on 3rd November, 1916, they were questioned by Lieutenant of Gendarmerie De Mandols, and made statements which were identical in all respects. On this occasion, Bolanis declared to Lieutenant de Mandols —

"When I was detained on board the *Résolu* a French officer and a Venizelist deputy made me sign a declaration to the effect that I had received 10,000 francs from Baron Schenk to organize this demonstration. I signed this declaration and it remained in their hands." It was much later, after the inquiry, that these agents, with the exception of one who had escaped, were authorized by an order of the Minister of the Navy of 24th August, 1918, to return to the Piræus. This was done at the request of the Greek Legation, and the men returned in January last (1919).

In other words, it was M. Venizelos, then Prime Minister, who intervened, through his Legation in Paris, for the release of these malefactors, guilty of the most abominable offence against their country.

The following document proves yet more conclusively M. Venizelos' collusion in this outrage. On 11th September the French Minister at Athens telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay :—

M. Venizelos has just been to inform me of his lively sympathy and deep indignation at the insult to the French Legation from some of his compatriots, led astray by German propaganda, and encouraged by the weakness of a Government which has for too long given them the benefit of a scandalous impunity.

GUILLEMIN.

M. Georges Boussenot, Deputy and former *rappoiteur* of the naval commission, wrote in 1920<sup>1</sup> :—

On the 9th a serious incident occurred. The gardens of the French Legation were broken into by Greeks, who gave themselves up to a violent demonstration against the Entente. The naval attaché reported this on the 10th (telegram 1270), declaring that such an insult called for severe reprisals, of which the first should be the occupation of Athens.

M. Boussenot added that the inquiry made by the Naval Committee had established that the persons who had attacked the Legation were Greeks, Venizelists in the pay of M. de Roquetaillfeuil.

Count Bosdari, the Italian Minister at Athens at the time, confirms in his Memoirs, just published,<sup>2</sup> all that has been said above about this disgraceful affair. He adds that the German Minister at Athens, who had learned what French agents were planning, warned M. Zaimis a few hours before the outrage, but without effect. Subsequently M. Zaimis, "according to his usual system, preferred to regard the incident as a very serious one, instead of an ignominious farce."

Two days later, M. Zaimis learned the truth about this indescribable outrage, through the judicial inquiry. To this scandal was added another—the shuffling out of the elections by the Allies themselves, and the fresh and surprising demands presented by their admiral. M. Zaimis, feeling that there was no further place for him in this network of scandals, resigned on 12th September.

On 14th September, the *Temps* gave this astonishing account of M. Zaimis' resignation :—

M. Zaimis was suspected at Court on account of his one time relations with M. Venizelos. He had advised, as inevitable, the acceptance of the latest Allied demands. Then fresh complications arose as a sequel to the attack on the French Legation organized by the German Minister.

<sup>1</sup> *La Renaissance politique, littéraire et artistique*, 18th December, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Alessandro de Bosdari, *Delle Guerre Balcaniche, della Grande Guerra, e di alcuni Fatti precedenti ad esse*. Mondadori, Milan, 1928, p. 166.

## VIII

A mystery which was never cleared up was the great fire of 18th July, which destroyed the Forest of Tatoi surrounding the royal summer palace, and in which King Constantine nearly perished. The inquiry did, indeed, elicit certain suggestive indications, but it met with enormous difficulties in a country in which the authority of the State was no longer unrestricted. It is said that in 1917 important documents were removed from the dossier by the Minister of Justice in the Venizelos Cabinet.

This fire, unique in its extent in the annals of contemporary Greece, broke out in three places equidistant from each other in the forest. From these starting-points it spread in geometrical lines in the direction of the castle, so as to encircle it. Probably M. de Roqueseuil was not innocent of all knowledge of this affair ; and had not M. Turot already suggested the kidnapping of the King and General de Castlenau his assassination ?

Count Bosdari calls this fire "a very singular one". He considers that it was the work of Franco-Venizelist agents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bosdari, *op. cit.*, p. 159

## CHAPTER X

### KALOGEROPOULOS MINISTRY

(16th September—4th October, 1916)

Formation of the Kalogeropoulos Ministry — Vain efforts of the new Cabinet to enter into negotiations with the Entente for the intervention of Greece — M Venizelos, supported by certain Allied authorities, goes to Crete, and thence to Salonica, in order to organize rebellion and civil war — Control of the Telegraphs.

#### I

One may gauge the unfortunate position of the King after M. Zaimis' resignation from the remarkably outspoken telegram which he sent on 16th September to his brother Andrew in London :—

The resignation of M Zaimis, who had the entire confidence of the country and myself, as well as the sympathy of the Entente Governments, as they assured me, has made the situation very difficult.

I asked M Dimitrakopoulos to form a Cabinet Before accepting definitely he thought it necessary to sound the Powers on important questions of an internal order. He interviewed the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, the British Minister, and became convinced that not only would the coercive measures not be removed before mobilization, but, on the contrary, they might be intensified, notably by direct intervention in our domestic affairs. Even after mobilization these coercive measures would only be relaxed. As for the elections demanded by the Allied Note of 21st June, and promptly agreed to by us, the Entente Ministers now demand that these shall not take place At the same time they forbid us to convoke the existing Chamber In these circumstances, M. Dimitrakopoulos declined to form a Ministry

Thus the situation has become inextricable The Entente naval and military authorities foment and encourage armed revolt in the country, and give every facility to the seditious movement in Salonica

by intensifying their vexatious measures and dealing with our public liberties with a heavy hand. The Entente Ministers are making all government impossible. The country is being driven into anarchy.

. I have already declared my willingness to enter the war on the side of the Entente, under certain conditions, which render participation in the interest of Greece. I am willing to negotiate on these lines. In order to do this, and in the common interest, I ask for the support of the Powers.

I have asked M. Kalogeropoulos to form a Ministry. He, too, is thoroughly well disposed towards the Entente.

## II

M. Kalogeropoulos was a politician of no special prominence. His only programme on assuming power was war on the side of the Entente. As soon as the new Cabinet came into office it hastened to declare that M. Zaimis' policy would be faithfully continued, and it telegraphed to Paris and London:—

Sharing the views which inspired the negotiations opened by its predecessors, the Government is resolved to continue the negotiations in the same spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Hardly had M. Kalogeropoulos spoken when M. Venizelos, fearing that Greece might intervene without him, commenced an attack with the object of compromising the new Cabinet in the eyes of the Entente. He denounced the Kalogeropoulos Cabinet to the Allied Ministers in Athens and the correspondents of foreign newspapers<sup>2</sup> as "pro-German". The intrigue succeeded perfectly because, after misleading the Entente concerning his "immense popularity", M. Venizelos offered Greek intervention "without conditions or guarantees", while the Kalogeropoulos Cabinet, more careful, like M. Zaimis, of the national interest, aimed at obtaining certain pledges and guarantees as to the rewards of victory. At the very moment when the tragic fate of Roumania was becoming clear, it would have been madness to rush into the war as Venizelos proposed doing.

Most of the big Greek profiteers who had interests in Paris

<sup>1</sup> Telegrams signed by Karapanos (Foreign Minister), and dated 16th September, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times* of 18th September, 1916.

and London supported the Cretan politician's anti-patriotic campaign. On 16th September M. Guillemin telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay :—

The Kalogeropoulos Cabinet has been established without the preliminary assent of the Entente. The Skouloudis-Streit-Dousmanis camarilla pulls the strings. The Ministry's game is to laugh at the Entente.

On 18th September Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd, confidentially :—

Briand informs me that the impression produced here by the constitution of the new Greek Cabinet is deplorable, it is composed of Theotokists and anti-Venizelists, and therefore of declared enemies of the Entente. Moreover, it has a political character, which is contrary to the Note of 21st June. Finally, it proposes to proceed with the elections, which is unthinkable, since the result would be unfavourable to the Allies.

On the margin of this telegram Nicholas II wrote: "I call this intervention in Greece's domestic affairs: it is a dangerous course."

On 19th September M. Karapanos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, telegraphed to Paris and London formally offering Greek intervention, "which would take place as soon as the Entente gave its support"; Greece would prepare her military forces within a period to be agreed on. The precise moment of the offensive "would be decided by the Allied staffs so as to ensure its not happening at a time when the Greek troops would be insufficient to make good the manifest numerical inferiority of the Allies". The offer closed with an appeal to the Entente to support the national claims of Greece at the Peace Congress.

Petrograd accepted in principle, but Paris and especially London raised objections; misled by M. Venizelos, they thought they saw in this merely a ruse to gain time.

On 20th September Isvolsky sent a long telegram to Petrograd full of indignation at Demidov's statement that France was thinking of dethroning Constantine. But he added that in France Constantine was considered to have fallen irrevocably under German influence. For this reason Briand wished to restrict the King's prerogative by securing

control of "all the administrative machinery of Greece", and so to ward off danger from Sarrail's rear. Isvolsky added that in France there were two policies regarding Greece: the moderate policy of Briand and the vigorous one of Lacaze, Minister of the Navy, but that Briand seemed to be yielding more and more to Lacaze. In conclusion, Isvolsky wrote that "acute tension between France and Greece suits Russian interests".

On the 21st Isvolsky informed Petrograd of Greece's offer of intervention, which had been presented by the Greek Minister on the previous evening to M. Briand :—

Greece asks that the negotiations shall take place under cover of the most absolute secrecy. She will consider herself released from all responsibility if the news leaks out prematurely.

Briand was at once favourably impressed. He stated that he was ready to enter into secret negotiations with the Greek Government, and has already telegraphed P Cambon to that effect. But Cambon has replied that Lord Hardinge says the Foreign Office do not consider the Greek offer genuine, it considers that King Constantine must be requested to form a Cabinet capable of inspiring confidence, and then to agree to a public, not a secret, treaty of alliance.

This reply of the Foreign Office was unexpected. Lord Hardinge, among others, was lamentably ready to believe M. Venizelos' statements.

On 23rd September Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd that the British Ambassador, acting on Government instructions, had suggested to M. Briand that the following demands be made to Constantine :—

- (1) The formation of a Ministry in which the Allies could feel confidence, and
- (2) The declaration of war on Bulgaria before 1st October.

On the same day Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd :—

Guillemin publicly proclaims that "the present Cabinet is preferable to the one before, since it absolves the Allies from all their engagements; the worse its composition, the better for us".

And Demidov, who was beginning to see things more and more clearly, added :—

Now that France has made herself arbiter of Allied policy in Greece, she is leading the country by devious paths towards civil war and revolution.

We have no grounds for doubting the integrity of the King, who has more than once given proof of extreme forbearance.

On the 26th Isvolsky telegraphed that M. Briand accepted the British proposals, and on the 27th the French and British Ambassadors in Petrograd were instructed to obtain Russian consent for a Note to this effect to be sent to Athens if so decided.

During this time M. Venizelos was haunted by the fear that his opponents might forestall him in the policy of intervention; he therefore, with M. de Roquetaillade's assistance, took ship on the 25th for Crete in order to start civil war there. Faced with this grave turn in events, the alarmed Athens Government signified to Paris that it was ready to declare war on Bulgaria if the Entente, satisfied by this decision, would give military and financial aid to Greece, and support her territorial claims at the Peace Congress.<sup>1</sup>

On the 29th Demidov reported to Petrograd that Sarrail "did not want the Greek army at the present juncture; he considered it was not in fighting mood". On 1st October he telegraphed that, adopting Sarrail's attitude, the Allied Ministers at Athens had informed their Governments that they considered Greece's projected entry into the war "inopportune" and "undesirable". It should be mentioned that the Italian Minister, Count Bosdari, by far the most intelligent of the Allied Ministers at Athens, had manœuvred with masterly skill to bring his colleagues to this decision. On the 5th Demidov reported that the Allied Ministers had decided to send a collective letter to Admiral Dartige du Fournet, noting the Greek failure.

- (1) To carry out the clause relating to the nomination of police officers satisfactory to the Allies.
- (2) To prosecute the authors of the outrage against the French Legation.
- (3) To seal the reservists' quarters.

<sup>1</sup> Romanos' telegrams, Paris, 27th and 28th September, and Karapanos to the Paris Legation, 28th September.

On the basis of this letter the admiral was to send Greece an ultimatum, after it had been approved by the Allied Governments. Nicholas II wrote in the margin of this dispatch : "The French Government are carried away by Sarrail and Guillemin, and efforts should be made to check their impulsiveness." Meanwhile the "secret" inter-allied police, notably in Athens, allowed themselves complete licence. These men, recruited from the dregs of the Greco-Levantine population, were furnished by the British with identity cards, and even with armlets, to ensure their immunity from the Greek police and laws. They motored up and down Athens, arresting passers-by with complete contempt for the personal and public liberties of the country. The scandal became so shocking that the British Legation itself had to cut down their powers.

Overwhelmed by all these events, the Kalogeropoulos Cabinet resigned on 4th October.

Although the Paris and London Cabinets had proof in their hands of the perfectly satisfactory attitude of the King and his Ministers towards them, they permitted their Press the effrontery of declaring that the King was thinking of entering the war on the side of the Central Powers. And the Allied papers, without exception, levelled invectives at the leaders in Athens, alternating with the vituperations of M. Venizelos.

### III

Before describing the beginning of the Venizelist sedition it is necessary to cite certain official documents exchanged between M. Briand and the French representatives abroad, because they reveal the state of mind of the Allied Governments at this period.

M. de Billy, French representative in Rome, telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay on 19th September :—

Baron Sonnino, while appreciating the Quadruple Entente's reasons for caution in regard to the new Greek Ministry, is of the opinion that it is necessary to temporize a little. *Baron Sonnino is also perturbed at the anti-dynastic movement, and he would not care to appear to support it either directly or indirectly . . .* He is therefore of the opinion that caution should be observed in regard to the Greek Cabinet, but, at present, no further step taken

Petrograd was of the same opinion, as the following telegram from M. Paléologue (20th September, 1916) to Paris indicates :

The Prime Minister shares your opinion of the situation in Greece. But before making any statement he wishes to know what measures the Government of the Republic intend to propose to their Allies. I hope that these measures may be of such a nature that if they produce a dynastic crisis we shall not appear to have premeditated this. Otherwise we should offer the extreme partisans of the Russian autocracy an argument which would not be without danger to the Alliance.

PALÉOLOGUE

On this M. Briand, perturbed by M. Guillemin's tendencies, sent him the following telegram (24th September, 1916) :—

Your attitude seems to me hardly favourable to an effective solution of the delicate situation of the Allies in regard to Greece. You are offering counsels of despair, which seems to me to be a policy of the utmost danger for the Allies in Greece, and in the present issue you are subordinating our action in Athens to the Venizelist political interests.

*I must repeat once again that you must be above all schemes of parties and persons, and must never forget that enemy propaganda is continually representing us as eternal fomenters of disorder and revolution.*

If M. Briand had punished instead of merely reprimanding, it is certain that there would never have been the muddle in the East which the pitiable mistakes of the French representatives in Greece produced.

On the very day when M. Briand cautioned M. Guillemin the latter, with M. de Roquetaillade and in agreement with Sarrail, threw M. Venizelos against Greece. The Cretan politician now had a single fixed idea—to dethrone his King, whose immense popularity aroused his jealousy and hate.

In raising the banner of revolt M. Venizelos was true to his nature and traditions.<sup>1</sup> For him civil war, which had been his passionate pursuit in Crete since youth, was a normal method of attaining power ! But, in order to calm his

<sup>1</sup> In 1905-6 he had already organized in Crete against Prince George, High Commissioner of the Powers, a revolt which strongly resembled in procedure and method the revolt at Salonica.

adherents of good faith, who had been disquieted by his conduct, he went so far as to maintain—singular contention—that the foreigners whose help he was accepting in order to usurp power loved Greece better than the Greeks themselves !

M. Venizelos' plan of action was simple. Continental Greece, the Ionian Isles and the Cyclades, nearly nine-tenths of Greece, being entirely hostile to him, there only remained his native island, Crete, and some islands in the Ægean where he could launch his campaign. He therefore went first to Crete, where the British Secret Service had prepared the ground by enlisting a certain number of adventurers.

The following is a description of M. Venizelos' departure from Athens, given to the Naval Committee of the French Chamber by the Chief of Staff to Admiral Dartige du Fournet, Captain Chamonard, who was an eyewitness :—

Without entering into the details of the intrigues and manœuvres which decided M. Venizelos's departure, it is no secret that the French Minister and, above all, Commander Roquèfeul, engineered it, and that the other Allied Ministers, though perhaps not unaware of it, were not involved.

The way in which this entirely political affair was conducted was not known to the C-in-C<sup>1</sup>. At the most, M. de Roquèfeul's telegrams to the Minister of the Navy, in which M. Venizelos was alternately referred to as an inconsistent rhetorician and as a politician of great importance,<sup>2</sup> gave the impression that growing pressure was being put on him to declare himself openly in revolt against the King. M. de Roquèfeul, for the rest, did not hide the fact that he was daily receiving the leaders of the Venizelist party in order to provoke a rupture. History will one day relate what promises were made in the name of France to this party and its chief by this officer with no authority and no official mandate !

On 21st September, on the French Minister's instructions, the *Jurien* was sent to Suda Bay. Her commander telegraphed as soon as she arrived that the insurrection was not encountering any resistance, and that the British had landed a detachment which had no need to take any action.

<sup>1</sup> Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet.

<sup>2</sup> In his reports Nos. 397 and 437 of 27th August and 22nd September, and in the telegrams which preceded or followed these reports, M. Venizelos was covered with ridicule.

On the night of the 24th M Venizelos, Admiral Kondouriotis, and a certain number of Venizelist leaders left Athens At 3 a.m. they embarked on the *Hesperia* at Phalerum, and she was escorted by the French torpedo boat *Magon* to Suda Bay

M Venizelos's departure was the occasion of a veritable masquerade Doubles of M Venizelos paraded themselves while Venizelos himself and his companions, disguised with false beards, made for a restaurant at Phalerum, officers of the Intelligence Service, accompanied by women, created an uproar in order to distract attention—and so on, no pains were spared Commander de Roquetaillade, the author of the scenario, has told the story in a long report which had, it is said, a certain *succès de rire* in the Cabinet at the time, but made us appear ridiculous to the other Powers

The consequences of this departure were unfortunately of the gravest Until then, the majority of the people, in old Greece at least, had been indifferent to the Entente but clearly hostile to M Venizelos, knowing that if he returned to power war would not long be delayed From the day of M Venizelos's departure, when it was declared that he was openly going to try consequences with the King and that the Entente Powers were supporting him, all the indifference of old Greece changed into hostility. The people, who had been simply anti-Venizelist until then, became anti-Entente. That was the most conspicuous result of the policy of Commander de Roquetaillade and the French Minister whom he won over.

When embarking, M. Venizelos sent an "historic message" to *The Times*, which was published in large type on 27th September :—

. . . I have warned King Constantine through one of the Entente Ministers (*sic*) that there was no time to lose if the country is to be saved I offered to abandon all claim to a ministerial post in order to assist him in doing his duty by the country . All was in vain and I am now forced to respond to the call of the people (*sic*) . . I hesitated before coming to this supreme decision I only take it because I am absolutely convinced that the proposals for intervention made by the actual rulers of Greece are not sincere. . . I am not a revolutionary. My action is not in any way directed against the King or the dynasty . . .

No one knew the secrets of intrigue so well as M. Venizelos ; the supports of the most firmly established States could not have resisted such an agent of dissolution. From the moment

when he landed at Crete, M. Venizelos pullulated solemn and emphatic declarations of loyalty to his King. The entire Press of the Entente resounded for several days with his loyalist professions, and labelled as "Sold to the Huns" those who ventured to charge the Cretan with conspiring against his King !

Hardly, however, had Venizelos uttered these words when he telegraphed confidentially to M. Guillemin<sup>1</sup> :—

. If, on arrival in Crete, I have had to declare that my action was not directed against King Constantine, I have done so purely in order to avoid displeasing the Allied Powers, for I am convinced that the King has definitely and irrevocably gone over to Germany.

And Venizelos added that he proposed to send against Athens "some of the army corps" which he was going to recruit. . . .!

On 5th October, after a "demonstration" in the *Ægean*, M. Venizelos, again with the assistance of the Allied squadrons, went to Salonica, where he installed himself "in the name of the Greek people", but under the protection of Sarrail. He took over the direction of his revolt, and formed, with Admiral Kondouriotis and General Danglis, the triumvirate which set up a "provisional government".

General Sarrail has given a very interesting account of Venizelos' arrival at Salonica. The following are the principal passages<sup>2</sup> :—

He arrived at Salonica on 9th October. King Constantine could have had him arrested ; he let him go Why ?

The General's statement is perfectly correct. M. Venizelos' intended departure was known in Athens several days beforehand. Indignant officers had even presented themselves to the King and offered to assassinate the Cretan politician. But King Constantine angrily dismissed them and even threatened to abdicate if such a crime were perpetrated.

Referring to the attempts at an agreement between Constantine and Venizelos, Sarrail writes :—

<sup>1</sup> The text of this telegram was transmitted by M Guillemin to the Quai d'Orsay, where it was communicated to Isvolsky. He telegraphed it to Petrograd on 15th October. (See Russian White Book, 1922 )

<sup>2</sup> *Revue de Paris*, 15th December, 1919, pp 694-700.

Without the support which I have never grudged him, would Venizelos always have been so intransigent ?

Sarrail then describes the resistance of the Greeks in Macedonia to the Venizelist mobilization. In this they were clearly justified : Venizelos was outside the law and working under the protection of foreign armies, and his recruiting was thus doubly illegal. Sarrail continues :—

Venizelos, however, was not discouraged , like a new Sisyphus, he daily attempted to roll the stone of mobilization upwards to its goal How many villages had to be invested in order to furnish the required contingent ! What shots were exchanged in Chalcidique and other places to prevent reservists from taking to the sea or the woods ! How many deserters or defaulters were caught, hidden, sometimes pampered in the convents of Athos ! Thus it was a tedious process forming the Venizelist units, which, moreover, we furnished with clothes, equipment, and victuals. On 22nd October, however, a first battalion was able to leave for the front . . . to succeed in mobilizing 1,000 men when the appeal had gone forth to all volunteers in Greece, is not the kind of thing that inspires enthusiasm. . . It took until 14th November to complete two more battalions to join their senior In March, 1917, there was still only one division of three infantry battalions with an embryo artillery.

But at what price was this military collaboration accomplished ? The incidents which the Venizelist government permitted or caused in this connexion ought to be covered up no longer. This is the sort of telegrams which it dispatched .—

In part of the Cretan territory mobilization was only partly successful. “Send deputies to stir up the zeal of the population, and allow them 500 drachmae for travelling expenses.”

In certain islands the reservists shouted that they would only respond to the King’s appeal “Send some Cretan gendarmes.”

In Samos, a representative of the government suggested promises of land in Asia Minor in order to encourage the laggards ! “If necessary,” a Venizelist Minister telegraphed, “terror must be established.”

And when M Jonnart arrived in Greece in order to force Constantine to abdicate 700 men of the Archipelago division deserted.

Led by the spirit of adventure, the least worthy elements of the Greek army ranged themselves from the first on the

side of M. Venizelos. Among them may be mentioned a Captain Kondylis who, in the rôle of recruiting sergeant, distinguished himself by his cruelty. In order to break the inhabitants' legitimate resistance to the illegal mobilization he scoured Chalcidique, burnt the homes of defaulters, imprisoned their relatives, executed a certain number of anti-Venizelists, put a price on the heads of others, and subjected women to tortures borrowed from the Inquisition to compel them to betray their men's hiding places. Subsequently M. Venizelos made this captain a general! A judicial inquiry in 1921 revealed that Kondylis was not the only one of M. Venizelos' subordinates to act in this manner.

Whatever one's point of view, it must be confessed that M. Venizelos by his action deeply divided the country against itself. That is a reality which cannot be concealed by any argument. From 1910 to 1914 Venizelism rendered signal services to the country, but after this it became an agent of national dissolution. That is the danger of all unconstitutional political action, however necessary it may be at a particular moment. It is always easy to step beyond the limits of legality, but it is difficult to return. Thus, ten years after this sanguinary conspiracy, Greece was still floundering in civil strife under the yoke of a few militarists, former disciples and comrades in arms of M. Venizelos.

#### IV

To the unreasonable demands of the ultimatum of 21st June the French Government had added, in its orders to Admiral Dartige du Fournet, the institution of control of the Greek posts and telegraphs, a measure which was much more vexatious than useful. But Admiral Dartige du Fournet never received definite instructions in this matter, only summary telegrams evidencing impulsive precipitation.

Though instructed by the Minister of the Navy to state that on several occasions the Greek Government had made use of the telegraphs to furnish our enemies with military information, he never received from Paris proof of any kind which might enlighten

him on the subject or guide him in his statements He had no knowledge of the acts for which he had to demand reparation<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the ultimatum which Admiral Dartige du Fournet had been required to send to the Greek Government on 5th October, and in which he formulated his several demands, Demidov telegraphed the next day to Petrograd :—

The British Minister hesitated long before initialing this document, with which I am reluctantly compelled to associate myself Elliot, greatly irritated, declared that it was impossible blindly to follow the French admiral in everything.

On 7th October Demidov telegraphed again that Elliot had just said to him that his Government considered “that the French admiral must not be allowed too great freedom of action”.

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 129.

## CHAPTER XI

### LAMBROS MINISTRY

(*October, 1916–May, 1917*)

The Lambros Ministry—Disagreements among the Allies—Sequestration of the Greek Fleet by the French—Military Control—Installation of French detachments at Athens—Evidence of Russian archives on the events of October—De Roquetaillade and Sarrail tax their ingenuity in totally disarming the Greek army.—Successful intervention of M. Benazet at Athens—Seizure of the Greek fleet by the French—The Ekaterini incident—General Rocques at Athens—Sequence of events which led to the skirmish on 1st December The eve of 1st December: A few incidents.—M. Venizelos' duplicity.—The skirmish of 1st December, mis-called an ambush—The day after the skirmish.—The period from December, 1916, to May, 1917.—The White Books of M. Venizelos

### I

The Allies had forced the Kalogeropoulos Ministry to resign on the pretext that under their ultimatum of 21st June they required that Greece should be governed by a business Ministry. We know to-day that this attitude was entirely owing to differences of opinion amongst the Allies. King Constantine was ignorant of this at the time, and, bent on giving full satisfaction to the requirements of the Allies, he formed a Cabinet all of whose members were carefully chosen from outside the realm of politics: he entrusted the leadership of the Government to a professor of history, M. Spiridion Lambros, who in turn surrounded himself with university professors. Clearly the King could not have travelled further from the sphere of politics. Accordingly the Entente governments finally decided to enter into relations with the Lambros Cabinet, which was formed on 8th October. The Paris papers, however, accorded a very

chilly welcome to the new Ministry; they styled it "a cabinet of anthologists", and returned to their campaign against the King.

M. Lambros' first move in regard to the Allies was a declaration that he would continue absolutely unchanged the policy of benevolent neutrality towards the Entente. He laid special stress on his predecessors' attempts to negotiate conditions for Greece's co-operation with the Entente and on M. Kalogeropoulos' latest offers, *which had remained unanswered*. At the same time he asked for modification of the pressure put on Greece, which, by restricting the liberties of the people, had exasperated public opinion.<sup>1</sup> Britain was satisfied with this declaration, but had to confer with her Allies before replying.<sup>2</sup> M. Briand, on the contrary, was dissatisfied; he said he was unable to understand how Greece could talk of neutrality after the invasion of Eastern Macedonia.<sup>3</sup> Finally the Allies agreed on a formula and sent a tardy and strange reply to King Constantine, in answer to the offers made by the Kalogeropoulos Cabinet. The following is the essential passage in the reply:—

Since the outbreak of war the Hellenic Government has offered more than once to range itself on our side, but on each occasion, particularly the last, these offers have been accompanied by conditions rendering them impossible of acceptance

They added that they had no need of Greece until she should, on her own initiative, declare war on Bulgaria. This was the only way to gain their confidence.<sup>4</sup>

## II

On 4th October there was a meeting of Allied Ministers at the French Legation in Athens to decide their attitude towards the new Greek Cabinet. M. Guillemin reported the result in a telegram to the Quai d'Orsay, of which this is the chief passage:—

<sup>1</sup> Zalokostas' telegram of 16th October, 1916, to the Greek Legations in Paris, London, Rome, and Petrograd.

<sup>2</sup> Gennadius' telegram from London, 19th October, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Romanos' telegram from Paris, 20th October, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> Gennadius' telegram from London, 23rd October, 1916.

No 1,845

ATHENS, 8th October, 1916

Admiral Dartige du Fournet declared his willingness to take over the control of the police, landing the necessary number of sailors—about 300 in his opinion

The British and Russian Ministers said that they could not agree to this proposal without special instructions from their Governments

The following telegram shows the British unwillingness to follow the course described by M. Guillemin. It was sent by Lord Grey on 7th October to the British Minister at Athens, and communicated at once to M. Guillemin and by him to M. Briand.

I agree with you that though the fleet is present to insist upon the execution of the Allied Governments' demands, this does not give the Admiral a right to take whatever measures he may think fit to this end. The plan of reinforcing the police in Athens and the Piræus would only be justified if there had been attacks on foreign subjects

GREY<sup>1</sup>

M. de Roquetaillade, who feigned ignorance of the attitude of the Allied Governments, did not scruple to telegraph on 8th October to the French Minister of the Navy actually declaring that

The only way out of our difficulties is to ignore the Foreign Ministers and pursue unhampered a French policy in Greece (Telegram No 1,487)

On the following day the Minister of the Navy replied to M. de Roquetaillade (Telegram 1868 A.) that he had informed the Commander-in-Chief that the measures "aimed at securing the safety of our fellow-countrymen, the dissolution of the Reservist League, the police, etc., need not be submitted for discussion to the Allied Ministers at Athens"!

Comment is needless. Unfortunately M. Briand, influenced by that section in France for whom Eastern diplomatic and military problems had become elements in internal policy, strove to persuade the Allies, Britain especially, to adopt coercive tactics. He actually sent a telegram to the French

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated

Ambassadors in Petrograd and London beginning in these terms :—

PARIS, 7th October, 1916.

The French Government feels that the situation in Greece is such that it can no longer continue to maintain a waiting attitude I consider that the cautious instructions issued to the British Minister no longer meet the situation

The telegram proceeded to enumerate all the measures needed to be taken against Greece to guarantee what were euphemistically termed “the interests of the Entente”.

The next day the British Ambassador went to the Quai d'Orsay and left in the hands of the Prime Minister a Note proving the complete disagreement which existed :—

Urgent and personal.

BRITISH EMBASSY,

8th October, 1916.

Monsieur le Président,

In regard to any measures which the French admiral may intend in Greek waters, I am instructed by Lord Grey to inform you that, whilst realizing that the Greek Government must be put in a position to fulfil its promises, he regards it as essential that he should be informed of all measures proposed by the admiral before they are carried out, so that the British Government may be in a position to discuss them beforehand with the French Government

BERTIE OF THAME<sup>1</sup>

On 9th October Admiral Dartige du Fournet received from the Rue Royale the telegram quoted above,<sup>2</sup> stating that he might act without the consent of the Allied Ministers.

Although this was too vague to satisfy the Admiral, who was always kept in ignorance of France's exact policy in regard to Greece, he decided to profit by the latitude extended to him in order to seize the Greek fleet—especially the light vessels—for future use by the Allies, who were gravely deficient in patrol boats and torpedo boats.

On 10th October the Admiral addressed an ultimatum to the Greek Government and to its admiral in command at Salamis, to take effect at 8 o'clock on the following morning. The ultimatum stated that, in view of the hostile tendency

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated.

<sup>2</sup> p. 229.

evidenced by the staff changes in the fleet<sup>1</sup> and by certain movements of troops in Thessaly, he demanded :—

- (1) The sequestration of all the light vessels then at Salamis.
- (2) The landing of the guns and the whole armament of the armoured vessels *Kilkis*, *Lemnos*, and *Averov*, and a reduction in their effectives.
- (3) The dismantling of all coastal batteries save three, which the Allies reserved for their own occupation.
- (4) The establishment of Allied control over the port of Piraeus and over the police and the railways.

Referring to the pretexts that he had to allege as grounds for his ultimatum, the admiral himself wrote later that they were both puerile and hypocritical.<sup>2</sup> He added :—

This seizure of the Greek fleet appeared, of course, to be a success, and several spectators felt called upon to congratulate the Commander-in-Chief. I can say now that, on the contrary, it was painful to him to be compelled by circumstances to use force against a neutral and weak nation, France's ward, and against a navy in which we numbered many friends. It had to be done and he did it. But it was to him no occasion for rejoicing or glorification. It was with such feelings that he replied to these misplaced compliments.<sup>3</sup>

The admiral's ultimatum to Greece astonished London and produced an immediate protest from the British Government. M. Jules Cambon reported this to M. Briand :—

PARIS, 11th October, 1916

Lord Eertie informs me of an urgent telegram from London, dated 10th October. The Foreign Office has learned from the Admiralty that Admiral Dartige du Fournet was to take measures on 11th October against the Greek fleet, which might go as far as the sinking of some of the Greek warships, in order to protect the Allied fleet and on account of the concentration of troops at Larissa.

The British Government is surprised that such strong measures should have been taken without its consent, since there are British ships under the French admiral's command.

<sup>1</sup> The Intelligence Service furnished the Admiral with information on this subject, which he later found to be incorrect.

<sup>2</sup> Dartige du Fournet, pp 138-9. Confirmed by Count Bosdari, *op. cit.* pp. 171-2.

<sup>3</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 141.

The British Government will refrain from giving direct orders to its admiral, but it desires Lord Bertie to ask the French Government to withhold action until M. Briand has given an explanation.

Until then the British Government cannot accept any responsibility for what may happen on the 11th October.

M. Briand immediately replied in terms which did not even attempt to justify the French initiative against Greece. He stated that in cases where French troops had accepted British direction, France had made no conditions or objections, and finished with a sharp reminder that Britain could not dissociate herself from French action in Greece without provoking the most unpleasant complications. Fortunately everything passed off calmly on 11th October. Thanks to the submissive spirit of the Greeks, an inter-Allied crisis was avoided.

The more incoherent the Entente's policy in Greece, the better was the Paris Press able to vindicate the acts of violence periodically committed against this little country. Thus, the day after the sequestration of the Greek fleet, all the Paris journals had this sensational headline : "Constantine plots behind our back," followed by innumerable propagandist telegrams about innumerable military convoys setting out from Athens for Larissa ! Actually all that had happened was that a few elementary and very modest precautions had been taken in Thessaly against the descent threatened by the Venizelists in the south and actually attempted the next month at Ekaterini.

The sequestration of the fleet produced a very legitimate display of patriotic grief throughout the country. Throngs of sailors tramped in sackcloth along the sacred road from Eleusis to Athens. They had brought away their flags, their portraits of the King and the icons of their patron saints ; not a man remained on board ; not one had rallied to Venizelos' army. The crowd, sorrowful and anxious, pressed round them on their route. On their arrival at Athens they were greeted with great acclamations, which they received in silence, their hands held up in acknowledgment, but no words passing their trembling lips.

A short time later the King reviewed these crews on the Champ de Mars ; it was a fitting recognition of their loyalty.

An enormous throng had gathered together from far and near to hail “the martyr king” and his loyal sailors. In spite of his absorbing grief the King, in full uniform, mounted on a white horse, retained a majestic and attractive bearing. His arrival was welcomed by an ovation which seemed as though it would never end. This huge mass of people thrilled with joy and emotion at the sight of him. He reviewed nearly 3,000 men, their faces marked with lines of suffering, and addressed these words to them :—

I rejoice that you have remained faithful to your oath You have not allowed yourselves to be seduced by promises either of moral or material rewards I thank you from the bottom of my heart and give you my word to protect you against whoever shall dare to threaten you

Officers and men wept on hearing these kingly words. This whole motley crowd felt that by coming to the Champ de Mars it had accomplished an act of piety on behalf of justice and truth, which, in this case, were blended with loyalty to their native land and the King.

It was a great and splendid popular manifestation, implying a dignified rebuke to the foreign Powers, “Protectors”—of the rebel Venizelos, whom the great majority of Greeks regarded as a traitor.

The recent Allied measures in Greece, especially the establishment of controls, had greatly excited the population, as was only natural. A great Press agitation began. On 16th October M. Guillemin announced to the Admiral that an alarming demonstration had just taken place.<sup>1</sup> M. Guillemin was inordinately exaggerating the importance of a small and peaceful demonstration ; he had been frightened by the laments of a free people who were being manacled and gagged. The Admiral was impressed, and in all good faith hastily dispatched two companies to Athens, equipped with machine-guns, which took up a position outside the municipal theatre, in the centre of the town.

The French sailors’ arrival and their parades through the streets of Athens were marked by painful incidents. An enormous crowd of exasperated citizens blocked up the

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 146.

streets, giving vent to hostile cries. "Not here ! To Berlin !" was one of their cries. As a collision between the French sailors and the crowd seemed alarmingly imminent, several companies of Greek foot and horse soldiers were told off to guard the French sailors unremittingly and to keep the crowd back.

On 18th October Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

In my opinion this landing was provoked by entirely imaginary causes. I venture to hope that the calmness of the city will lead the Admiral to recall his men. In confidence—my English colleague has confessed to me his distress at being forced to yield on this point to Guillemin's tenacious insistence

### III

On 14th October, in a telegram<sup>2</sup> to Isvolsky in Paris, M. Sturmer, the Russian Prime Minister, inveighed in forcible terms against the confusion between the provinces of the soldier and the politician which had caused the transformation of military chiefs into political agents :—

If this state of things were to continue, the time would come when it would be impossible for us to co-operate in united action with the Allies. Sarrail is specially to blame. Deviating from his proper duties, he is busying himself with political schemes, to the great detriment of the grave military interests entrusted to him

Then, alluding to the words and gestures with which Sarrail had received Venizelos at Salonica, he said that he considered that "the general gave the impression of being the instigator of this rebellion, the aim of which is anti-dynastic". M. Sturmer added that on all these points there was complete agreement between Petrograd and London.

On 15th October Isvolsky telegraphed that the Quai d'Orsay had communicated to him, confidentially, the text of a telegram from Venizelos to Guillemin, and Isvolsky added :—

If the Allies furnish material aid, he will be able to put into the line not one, but several, army corps, some of which he intends to

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>2</sup> This and the succeeding documents in this section are quoted from the Russian White Book, published in 1922.

direct against the Athens Government, which is "easy to overthrow". It cannot be denied that this programme of Venizelos is sympathetically received here . . his ultimate aim is certainly the removal of the King . .

. . All the men in high office here have declared to me that the French Government has not the slightest intention of establishing a republic in Greece, for it is convinced that in such a case the country would fall into anarchy. But the people here would like to see the diadochus<sup>1</sup> on the throne. It is into this intrigue that Briand seeks to draw Grey . . I believe that if an agreement on these lines were reached between Grey and Briand we should have no interest in opposing it I even think it would be of great advantage to us to cease to protect Constantine and, recognizing France as arbiter on Greek questions, to demand from her in return concessions in the domains which touch our vital interests

On the 16th Isvolsky announced the official application of Venizelos for *de jure* recognition of his Government, and said that the French Cabinet was already giving material support to M. Venizelos and was considering granting him a first credit of six million francs.<sup>2</sup>

On the 19th Isvolsky telegraphed that M. Briand, in reply to M. Sturmer, had told him that orders had been given to Sarrail not to meddle with politics.

On the 20th Isvolsky reported that Briand's wish to find a basis of agreement between Venizelos and the King was opposed to French public opinion, "which demands the King's removal."•

On 21st October Demidov telegraphed :—

The British Minister has just informed Venizelos that the British Government would not, under any circumstances, support his movement if it is antidynastic. He received the following telegram in reply from Venizelos : "The provisional government never had and has not now an antidynastic programme" But Venizelos considers it indispensable to have a guarantee that "the Greek

<sup>1</sup> The Crown Prince.

<sup>2</sup> It should be mentioned that after the war Greece was asked to reimburse to France all the sums which it had pleased her to advance at Salonica to Venizelos to assist him in his rebellion against the Greek people and constitution.

army shall henceforth be inspired by strictly democratic principles, and that the country shall no longer be governed by Prussian methods."

The events that followed were to prove that falsehoods could not be woven with more refined art.

On 24th October, Benckendorff telegraphed from London to Petrograd :—

From a political point of view I should not be surprised if London begins to be concerned about Guillemin—that adventurous spirit—especially since he has had the French admiral under his control, which has given him an influence far outweighing that of his colleagues There is no sympathy here with Guillemin

Finally, on 11th November, the same Ambassador wrote :—

Grey has told me that he still considers that the only really satisfactory solution would be a reconciliation between the King and M Venizelos, unfortunately he does not see how to effect it However, he added "We must not discourage Venizelos, British public opinion is getting more and more impatient"

#### IV

The precautions taken in Thessaly by the Athens Government against a Venizelist descent furnished the pretext for the most brutal of the demands which were presented to Greece. According to the remarkable statement made by Captain Chamonard to the naval commission of the French Chamber, M. de Roquetaillade had contended that these measures were directed against the Eastern army. The sequel completely exposed the baselessness of M. de Roquetaillade's allegations. In any case the war material in Greece's possession would have been absurdly insufficient for the smallest operation. General Rocques, French Minister of War, who came to Greece about this time, said to Admiral Dartige du Fournet that "in present war conditions the Greek army could not fight for more than three days; after that its rifles would be of no more value than so many sticks". The admiral himself told the author this. Thanks to the control of the railways which he had just obliged Greece to

yield to him, the admiral was able even to put difficulties in the way of the Greek police precautions in Thessaly. Everything seemed to be going well when he suddenly received from Paris, and simultaneously from the Eastern army, the suggestion that he should seize and send to Salonica 1,500,000 cartridges stored in the neighbourhood of Athens.

I was instructed to present this demand as compensation for the increase in the strength of the Bulgarians resulting from the cessions of Rupel and Cavalla, with the troops and material in these districts<sup>1</sup>

The admiral was himself indignant at the putting of the matter in this way, for it was the British Admiral Commanding in the Ægean who had prevented the Greeks from embarking their troops and material, in the hope of compelling them to join the Venizelist rising in Salonica.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Chamonard confirmed that the demand for disarmament came from Sarrail, who was only accessible to suggestions from M. de Roquetaillade. By his action at Salonica M. Venizelos had encouraged General Sarrail and M. de Roquetaillade in this unspeakable proceeding. M. Venizelos was the principal beneficiary of the new demand ; once Greece had been entirely disarmed, with his handful of soldiers he would be able to conquer Athens, without striking a blow. It should also be mentioned that M. Venizelos was continually sending from Salonica to the British and French Legations in Athens veritable instructions as to the political line they should take !

It was at this difficult moment that M. Benazet, Deputy in the French Chamber, came on a mission to Salonica. On his way to Athens he was invited to visit the King. He did so, but only after receiving M. Briand's assent. He came in a semi-official capacity, with a view to seeking an arrangement of pending questions. He was received in audience on 23rd October. The King spoke in very plain terms to him, and told him his grievances against the policy which the Entente had followed in regard to Greece from the

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 150.

<sup>2</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 151.

beginning of the war. He complained especially of the French Minister, and above all of M. de Roquetaillade. M. Benazet endeavoured to show the King how the intentions of the Entente Powers in regard to Greece had been misunderstood, and the long telegram which he sent on the same day to M. Briand through the French Minister shows that he tried to secure the King's agreement to (1) the demobilization of the 1913 B class, (2) the removal to the Peloponnesus of the greater part of the Greek garrisons, and (3) the cession, in return for an indemnity, of the military and naval war supplies, including munitions and torpedoes. In his telegram M. Benazet added that the King had said to him in regard to the delicate question of war supplies : " All that I want is that France should state her requirements, leaving me to understand that they are the price of neutrality, which I shall be absolutely free to observe."

M. Benazet reported his reply to this as follows : "*I made myself guarantor for the French Government that Greece should in no case suffer for this cession.*" Farther on in the same telegram he said :—

The King desires that the most absolute secrecy shall be maintained as to his intentions. He is afraid of appearing to be infringing the general neutrality on which he is bent. He declares his readiness to make the utmost concessions to us to prove his good faith, but he does not wish to expose himself to the risk of a declaration of war from Germany.

On the following day, the 24th, King Constantine confirmed in a letter written by his own hand the precise engagements into which he had entered, and M. Benazet transmitted this at once to M. Briand. On the 26th M. Briand telegraphed to M. Benazet :—

Every congratulation, my dear friend, on your skilful negotiations and the good results which they have procured.

This telegram, of which the undeniable meaning must be emphasized, implied the Prime Minister's ratification as Premier and Foreign Minister of the agreement concluded by M. Benazet. Thus M. Benazet's action, begun in a semi-official capacity, acquired through its success an official

character. Relations improved at once between the Athens Government and the representatives of France ; the King received the admiral for the first time, and also received M. Guillemin, whom he had ceased to see for some time.

On 31st October M. Guillemin telegraphed to M. Briand : "The Venizelists have shown deep discontent with the Benazet arrangement." On 3rd November he telegraphed again : —

M Venizelos is complaining of the agreement arrived at between the King and the Entente ; Venizelos is very sceptical about the engagements entered into by the King ; he considers that the French and British Ministers went too far in affirming the moral obligation of the Entente not to permit the Venizelists to obtain possession of Thessaly.

On 2nd November Admiral Dartige du Fournet sent to the Athens Cabinet, as anticipated, a Note demanding the cession of the ships which had been sequestrated up to then, and the right to make use of the arsenal at Salamis in return for the payment of an indemnity. Greece replied on the 6th with a *pro forma* protest, and on the 7th the admiral hoisted the French flag over the confiscated vessels, and occupied the arsenal at Salamis, without the least difficulty being made by the Greeks.<sup>1</sup>

On this occasion the British Minister in Athens allowed it to be seen from his resentment that these measures were entirely the work of France.

The King gave further substantial pledges : he had decreed the demobilization of the last class, and the transfer of troops from Thessaly and Eubœa to the Peloponnesus had begun under the supervision of French officers.

Suddenly it was learnt at Athens, on 4th November, that the Venizelists in Salonica, instead of attacking the "hereditary enemy" on the north, had crossed the southern Macedonian border and attacked the loyalist troops at Ekaterini. The news produced immense indignation throughout Greece. The incident made of the Venizelists no longer an anti-Bulgar but a rebel force ; civil war had come, and the immediate result was the cessation of all movements

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 168

of troops towards the Peloponnesus, and great excitement among the population. The cause of the attack was evident : M. Venizelos would not at any price accept the Benazet agreement, because by putting an end to the Greco-Allied imbroglio it struck a fatal blow at his subversive enterprise. Alarmed at the fortunate turn of events, he threw off the mask of patriotism and attempted by this blow to face the Entente with a new situation.

Admiral Dartige du Fournet was greatly disturbed by this incident ; he was incapable of playing or even seeming to play a double game. He telegraphed at once to General Sarrail in this sense ; the general replied that he would restore order. The admiral also sent a personal telegram to M. Politis, Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Venizelist Salonica Government, pointing out to him the damage which the attack on Ekaterini was doing to the interests of the Entente. M. Politis replied in a telegram showing great embarrassment ; he threw the responsibility on the royalist troops, which, he pretended, had marched—against Macedonia !<sup>1</sup>

This reply revealed an astonishing degree of bad faith, when it is remembered that on the eve of the incident M. Politis had himself informed M. Benazet that “a telegram was about to be sent by the provisional government to the Venizelist troops instructing them to march against the royalist troops encamped at Ekaterini, and not to hesitate to come to blows”.<sup>2</sup>

The clash took place, but thanks to the admiral’s intervention, supported by the Allied Ministers, the Venizelists suspended their attack, and the royalist troops in turn were ordered to avoid any conflict.

General Rocques, the French Minister of War, then on a visit of inspection to Salonica, was gravely disturbed by the Ekaterini incident. In the name of the Government,<sup>3</sup> he asked M. Benazet, who was also in Salonica, to go at once

<sup>1</sup> Chamonard’s evidence before the naval commission, and Dartige du Fournet, pp. 169–70.

<sup>2</sup> *Matin*, 26th August, 1923, telegram of 3rd November, from the Admiral to the Rue Royale Benazet report to the Quai d’Orsay.

<sup>3</sup> Revelations of the *Matin*, 26th August, 1923, and statements of M. Benazet to the author.

to Athens and to try to counteract the effect of this disloyal manœuvre. M. Benazet reached the King on the following day; he made a supreme effort and had some success. On his departure from Athens on 8th November M. Benazet sent to Paris through the admiral a long telegram of which the following are the principal passages :—

I did my best, in spite of the unfortunate events at Ekaterini, to find a basis of agreement and a formula for our demand which would make it possible for the King and the Prime Minister to induce the royalist party, which constitutes the great majority of the nation, to accept the total disarmament to which the King is committed.

After some general remarks M. Benazet gave the text of the draft demand to the French Government, for forwarding as soon as possible to the Greek Government, a demand “of which the terms have been settled word by word in agreement with the King and the Prime Minister”. The demand, after enumerating the war material to be given up, provided for compensation as follows :—

The Allied Powers undertake to bring an end to the measures of pressure which they have adopted up to this day, *and never to tolerate Greek armed groups which have declared that their only purpose is to fight for the defence of the national aims allowing themselves to be turned away from this ideal in order to engage in seditious acts.*

On return to France, however, this successful negotiator was unable to conceal from his friends his depression. He felt that once he had left Greece his work would be destroyed by the French Minister.

On 9th November M. Briand telegraphed to M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London : “The execution of the King’s promises has been impeded by the unfortunate incident at Ekaterini.” On the same date M. Guillemin telegraphed to M. Venizelos at Salonica confidentially :—

Following M. Benazet’s journey and the King’s manifestation to him of a conciliatory disposition, there has been a sort of rapprochement with official Greece. This was necessary on account of our Allies....

I am glad that the solution found for the Ekaterini affair seemed satisfactory to you, in spite of the sacrifice which it proved necessary

to ask of you . ' I hope that the five million francs paid the day before yesterday by the French Government to the Banque de l'Union Parisienne has already been placed at your disposal

GUILLEMIN

Finally, on 19th November, King Constantine sent to M. Briand another letter, expressing his satisfaction at the agreement which had resulted from his conversations with M. Benazet.

M. Benazet had scarcely left when General Rocques reached Athens from Salonica. On the same day he received from Paris a telegram asking him definitely to settle the outstanding questions, such as the Ekaterini incident, the utilization of the Greek railways, the withdrawal of the 3rd and 4th Greek corps into the Peloponnesus, and the cession of arms. This telegram was curious and surprising : it called on the War Minister to settle questions which at that Minister's own request M. Benazet had already settled, and had already reported to Paris as settled. General Rocques began by disavowing the Venizelist attack on Ekaterini, and in order to prevent the recurrence of any such attempt he decided to create a neutral zone, four to five kilometres in width, from Epirus to the Ægean. Finally, after agreeing with M. Lambros and the King, everything was settled except the delivery of arms.

On the very day after the treachery at Ekaterini, directed primarily against King Constantine, M. Venizelos thought it discreet to send to the queen-mother Olga, who was in Russia, a telegram of sympathy and loyalty. Was his object to sow discord in the royal family ? It is probable. But the aged queen replied with the following very dignified telegram, sent on 9th November to the archbishop of Salonica :—

I shall joyfully give credence to the sentiments expressed on the occasion of the anniversary of the glorious capture of Salonica by my son, when they return to their oath of fidelity to the successor of one who sacrificed his life for a Greece strong in union and not torn by anarchy and a forgetfulness of duties to her unjustly calumniated King

OLGA.

The censorship prohibited the publication of this telegram in France.

## V

After the departure of General Rocques there still remained for settlement the question of the cession of war material. The following were the conclusions arrived at by the naval commission of the French Chamber in its report already quoted :—

What importance did the French Government attach to the delivery of the war material ? General Rocques defined this himself when he passed through Athens : in the name of his Government he gave instructions to Admiral Dartige du Fournet clearly laying down that the delivery of material was, in his own words, a question to *enviser* and to make the subject of *negotiations*. The Minister of War added that the action initiated should be pursued with prudence and without undue haste.

Admiral Dartige du Fournet clearly realized the enormity of such a demand on a neutral country. Over against the direct instructions given by a member of the French Government in the name of M. Briand, the Prime Minister, there were different instructions sent to him by the Rue Royale.<sup>1</sup> But neither Rocques' nor Lacaze's instructions mentioned the guarantees provided under the Benazet agreement as a compensation to Greece. M. de Roquemore, meanwhile, was pursuing his intrigues at the Rue Royale, in his obsession with violence ; on 25th October he telegraphed to Paris, "The Allied Governments are jealous of us, and would be glad to destroy our work in Greece."

On 16th November Admiral Dartige du Fournet, in a difficulty as to the course to be taken, had a first Note sent to the Athens Cabinet, worded as discreetly as possible in the circumstances, demanding from Greece, in the name only of the French Government, the cession to it of the rifles, guns, machine guns, munitions, lorries, and so on, of which a list was given. Ten mountain batteries were to be surrendered at once and the remainder as soon as possible. The admiral found himself compelled to couch this demand in really rough terms, as an "equitable" compensation for the cessions made to the Bulgarians, but in his conscience

<sup>1</sup> The French Admiralty    Admiral Lacaze, Minister of the Navy.

he suffered for this last hypocritical formula. In accordance with the verbal instructions left by the War Minister, no undertaking was given not to convey the surrendered munitions to the Venizelists, a fact which made the demand so much the worse.

On receipt of this Note the King summoned a Crown Council which met on 19th November. It was composed of past Premiers and Ministers, and M. Lambros submitted to it the admiral's Note on the surrender of arms together with another from him demanding the expulsion from Greece of the diplomatic agents of the Central Powers. The majority of the Council, terrorized, was inclined to accept these two grave demands without more ado. But M. Skouloudis objected :—

I do not think that we can in any case acquiesce in this · it would be to deprive the country, and above all the capital, of all means of legitimate defence. You would then, Sire, see Venizelos come at the head of a few armed individuals, establish himself in front of the Palace, and command as a dictator Even apart from this, can a free State legitimately give up its arms ? Greece could never inflict such an outrage on herself. And I am sure that even if you gave the order officers and soldiers would refuse to give up their arms until vanquished.

These words made a manifest impression on those present. It was pointed out that if this line were taken it would also be necessary to reject the demand for the expulsion of the diplomats of the Central Powers. M. Skouloudis disagreed with this :—

It is not easy for the people to appreciate the finesses of international law. If we broke with the Entente over this demand our people would not understand our action. On the other hand, what people would not resent the insult of being required to give up its arms ? If the Entente were to go so far as to declare war over this, Greece would, no doubt, fall ; but she would fall with honour !

On the same day the King sent for the admiral and expressed to him his surprise at receiving a Note so different from that which had been agreed on. He asked the admiral why he spoke only in the name of the French Government,

and what had become of the Benazet guarantees. He did not disguise the fact that their absence entirely changed the situation. The King proceeded to complain that the French, in spite of their declarations that they wanted to disarm Greece, were accumulating stores of arms in Athens on the premises of certain Venizelists, whose names he gave. The admiral at once sent a long telegram reporting this audience to the Minister of the Navy ; he received no reply ! On the same day M. Guillemin telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay :—

The King is depressed and preoccupied. He regrets the absence of guarantees in the Note just presented by Admiral Dartige. "The matter is now closed," the King said ; "the people and the army will not allow me to surrender the rifles and guns which, indeed, are theirs ; and as I am not offered the necessary compensations (Benazet) I have no means of influencing opinion. . . You are giving M. Venizelos hardly disguised protection. You want me to give up arms which he will use against me You are supporting this man, who is nothing but a rebel and a traitor"

GUILLEMIN

On 22nd November the Greek Government replied to the admiral's Note with a formal refusal. Among other reasons for its refusal it mentioned the humiliation which the demand implied for the nation, and it appended to its letter a detailed comparative statement of the Greek arms taken by the Bulgarians and by the Allies, showing a great preponderance of the latter over the former. Admiral Dartige du Fournet, ordinarily so moderate, on this occasion took his cue from the Rue Royale and thought fit to reply to the Greek Note with an ultimatum expressed in terms of unnecessary energy. He did this on the 24th ; the ultimatum ended with the following injunction :—

The higher orders in virtue of which I am acting are such as do not allow of a long discussion . . . as a proof of good faith I demand ten mountain batteries by 1st December at the latest, and the date for the delivery of the remainder of the material cannot be extended beyond 16th December , if I do not receive satisfaction I shall be obliged to take, from 1st December, all the measures which the situation may demand.

On the same day the admiral reported his action to the

Rue Royale, indicating the military measures which he would take if the guns and munitions were not delivered to him.

In his telegram of 25th November to the Quai d'Orsay M. Guillemin expressed approval of the admiral's attitude, but added : " I think, however, that it would have been preferable first to settle other questions, before demanding the delivery of the war material." On the 25th the admiral received a reply to his telegram from the Rue Royale :—

The Government approves the measures which you propose to take if you do not receive the material before 1st December, but you are requested to make the necessary arrangements to prevent any attempt to damage the material . You will also try to induce the Greek Government to anticipate the date of delivery as far as possible, relying on the formal promises made by the King, whom you may see if necessary.

This telegram calls for some comment ; the last phrase in particular was absurd. As has been seen, the promises made by the King to M. Benazet were met by equally formal engagements on France's part. Moreover, how could the admiral prevent the deterioration of material spread all over Greece ?

In the days that followed the admiral, the French Minister, and the naval attaché made no secret of the fact that events were taking a serious turn (telegrams of the 26th and 27th). But it seems that none of them realised the extremity of patriotic exasperation to which the Greek population had been driven. In Athens the young men ran in "thousands to the barracks and claimed arms for the defence of " the sacred hearths of the country against the allies of the traitor Venizelos ". For several days these volunteers, the garrison, and the whole population of Athens, in the grip of intense excitement, proclaimed to all the world that the Allies would not get the Greek war material without marching over thousands of Greek corpses. On the 27th the admiral, after an interview with the King, telegraphed to the Minister of the Navy<sup>1</sup> :—

I have seen the King. He protested his good faith, and mentioned in evidence of it the fact that it was he himself who took the initiative

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 201.

in sending home the two classes serving with the colours, a fact for which he says he has never been given credit. But the affair of the war material has so excited public opinion and the army that he feels powerless. . . .

I replied that my orders were definite, and that on the morning of 1st December I should land the personnel needed to impose the will of the Entente Governments.

My personal opinion is that the King, not having received the guarantees for which he hoped, and which were detailed in my telegram of 8th November, considers himself released from his promises.

This telegram is of great historic importance ; it refutes in advance all subsequent calumnies, all the charges of setting an ambush.

After this interview the admiral tried to persuade the King that his landing on 1st December would have the character of a peaceful demonstration aimed at saving the King's face with the Central Powers, and said that the Allied troops would occupy certain points dominating Athens and would hold them until the arms had been given up. But the King refused to be convinced. He also, according to the admiral's statement, categorically refused to issue a proclamation ordering the arms to be given up.

Unfortunately this so-called peaceful demonstration was and could be peaceful only in name.

On the same day the Minister of the Navy confirmed to the admiral his approval (given on the 25th) of the proposed measures ; adding, however, that "there should, of course, be no question of extended military operations or of the forcible acquisition of the promised material". To order a military operation, but to recommend that arms should not be used, was certainly a novel idea ! Meanwhile the British Government showed some disapproval of the pressure which France was preparing to put on Greece. M. Briand accordingly sent the following Note to Lord Bertie on the 28th :—

The Government of the Republic has authorized the admiral to take the measures which he envisaged, namely the occupation of the Piraeus, the observatory heights, and the arsenals. It has been made clear that there should be no question of the forcible acquisition of the material promised, which is spread all over Greece.

Should the Greek Government, however, fail to keep its promises, the Government of the Republic considers that the Allies should be freed from any sort of necessity to spare this Government, and that they should be authorized, in view of the King's breach of his word, to take precautionary measures and the very stringent guarantees for which the circumstances may call.

The repeated allusion to the King's breach of his word, considered in the light of the facts and documents adduced above, was to say the least paradoxical.

On the 28th the Quai d'Orsay also sent a telegram to M. Guillemin, informing him that "there can be no question of withdrawing the demand presented by the admiral", and that the latter was "free to judge" the means of pressure requisite to secure "the carrying out of the engagements entered into" [sic]. On top of this the admiral received from the Rue Royale a reply to his telegram of the 27th which may be summarized as follows: "I do not understand your remark. Have you not full latitude?"<sup>1</sup> This reply shows that the French Admiralty still pretended to know nothing of the Benazet agreement; still more serious, it proposed to reap its fruits without paying the agreed price. Only later did it transpire that on his return to Paris General Rocques had made no mention of the instructions which he had given to the admiral on leaving Athens.<sup>2</sup> And in January, 1917, M. Poincaré, President of the Republic, and M. Briand told the admiral that they had had no knowledge of his ultimatum to Greece! The telegrams here reproduced clearly prove the direct contrary.

From what has been said it may definitely be concluded that on the eve of the events of 1st December there was complete chaos and confusion in the French diplomatic and naval services.

On the 30th the admiral replied to the Rue Royale:—

I made no comment, but simply reported that the King was clearly hoping to receive the guarantees agreed in the semi-official draft demand quoted in my telegram of 8th November

On the afternoon of the 30th the admiral received the

<sup>1</sup> Chamonard's evidence, confirmed by several witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 205.

Greek Government's reply to his Note of the 24th. As was to be expected, it was a still more definite refusal than its predecessor. It ended as follows :—

I should be sorry to believe, Monsieur l'Amiral, that after examining fairly and with goodwill the reasons which make it impossible for the Greek people to satisfy you, you will desire to proceed to "the measures which the situation may demand", measures which would run counter to the ties of traditional friendship which unite France and Greece, and which the people would justly consider as *hostile acts* committed against them by order of the Government of the Republic

LAMBROS

The Athens Government could not have been franker or more explicit.

## VI

By this time M. Venizelos, with remarkable shrewdness, had managed to gain the confidence of certain influential Englishmen, against his King, and succeeded in instigating a series of questions in the House of Commons in his interest. On 7th November Lord Robert Cecil made the following statement as to the pledges given by the Athens Government in regard to safeguarding the Allied communications :—

The Allied Governments have no reason as yet to be dissatisfied with the manner in which the Greek authorities are carrying out their pledges.

Yet on the very same day *The Times* was maintaining exactly the opposite in its editorial columns. Its comments were based on the affirmation of a certain "well-informed correspondent at Athens" to whose views it had been giving prominence day after day; this mysterious informant was none other than M. Venizelos, always a past master of the arts of propaganda.

During the second half of November sensational revelations "coming from an authoritative source" concerning the network of Greek intrigues against the Allies began to appear in the Press of all countries, the origin of this flood of news being traceable to telegrams from Salonica. The charges made against Greece were childishly silly, but by that stage

in the war common sense was paralysed, and the public would swallow the wildest *canard*. This was at the time of the alleged torpedoing of the "Angheliki" and "Issaia," when the soberest newspapers maintained that "the small uninhabited islands at the mouth of the Piræus were being used as hiding places and bases for German submarines", a piece of news which caused a certain amusement among professional sailors, seeing that the rocks in question are inaccessible !

In a speech delivered on his departure for Salonica, M. Venizelos had been guilty of a certain freedom of language in referring to the King, but finding that certain of the Allies were inclined to take alarm at this, he took an early opportunity of eating his words and even, by a piece of skilful acting, giving expression to the deepest and most absolute loyalty to the throne. He displayed, indeed, such remarkable agility in camouflaging his real motives by violent Bulgarophobe outbursts and general patriotic flag-waving that nearly everybody was put off the scent.

On 8th November Mr. Asquith (then Prime Minister), speaking at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, said :

M Venizelos has assured us, and we do not doubt it, that his efforts and his organization are in no sense directed against the throne of Greece. His sole object is to ensure that Greece takes a worthy part in the world-wide struggle for liberty.

On 13th November Lord Robert Cecil said, in reply to questions in the House of Commons :—

I do not understand that M. Venizelos regards himself as revolting from the Government of the King

And on the 18th, in reply to an hon. member who asked how Lord Robert Cecil could pretend that M. Venizelos was not in rebellion against his king, seeing that he was raising an army in defiance of his sovereign's authority, Lord Robert answered :—"We have M. Venizelos's own account of it."

On the 21st *The Times* in a leading article quoted M. Venizelos' rejoinder, full of moral indignation, to the "base calumny" of the charge of disloyalty to the King levelled against his policy.

All these solemn protestations of loyalty were part of a fabric of sham and deceit, the effrontery of which may be illustrated by reference to a private letter dated 30th November addressed by M. Venizelos to Dr. R. Burrows and published by the latter in his memoirs (London, 1924). —

The Powers are convinced, as they could not fail to be, that the King has violated the Constitution, and by forcing his personal policy upon the nation, has sacrificed the true interests of Greece to those of the enemy—Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey—with no other object than to impose the “divine right of kings” upon the Greek nation. In so doing, King Constantine has broken his own royal oath as well as prejudicing the interests of his people. In such circumstances I am quite unable to understand why such violent efforts should continue to be made to save him from the consequences of his treachery. Efforts of this nature, which condone so heinous a political crime, are contrary both to elementary morality, to the political prestige of the Allies, and to the vital interests of Greece. If the Allied Powers shelter King Constantine from the results of his treacherous conduct they will enable him to pursue the same germanophile policy after the war is over.

I feel so pessimistic about the future of Greece if King Constantine remains on the throne after the end of the war that I shall consider it my duty in those circumstances to retire from political life immediately peace is signed.

Summing up, I consider that every dictate of political morality, the interests of the Allies, and those of the Greek nation, all demand that the Powers should withdraw their protection from this royal traitor.

M. Venizelos then proceeded to enlarge, in a strain which would have made Sarrai laugh, on the strength of his military forces. He described the eagerness of the Ægean and Ionian islanders (with the exception of Corfu) to join in with him—a statement palpably at variance with the truth, for all the Greek islands, except Crete, Mytilene, Chios, Samos, and Lemnos, were passionately anti-venizelist. He inveighed against the neutral zone as a barrier to the extension of his power in Thessaly, the people of which were “whole-heartedly for him”—an equally mendacious statement. He protested against Lord Robert Cecil’s assertion that he was “acting in the name of King Constantine”

in the words : " That is wrong ! The provisional Government is acting in the name of the nation, and with its mandate " (*sic*).

He concluded with a phrase which is characteristic of all conspirators :—

You can make use of anything I have said about the King, provided you do not mention my name, for I do not wish to estrange any of the Allied Powers.

This letter reveals a duplicity and a cynical mendacity that must surely be almost unparalleled.

## VII

The collisions which took place on 1st December, 1916, and with their version of which the French Press thrilled and horrified Entente opinion, were negligible from a purely military point of view, but their moral aspect is of great significance, for they represented the culmination of the French policy of aggression against a small nation to prevent it from exercising its right to remain neutral.

On 29th November Admiral Dartige du Fournet became aware that there was considerable unrest in Athens, both in the army and among the people, as the result of the resentment caused by his demands. Voluntary detachments were to be seen parading the streets and shouting. He displayed no undue uneasiness on this account, but asked the opinion of M. de Roquetaillade, who had returned from France a few days before. He replied : " The Greeks are merely bluffing. Stick to your guns, Admiral, and they will hand over their weapons like lambs," and in a telegraphic report to Paris about the same time he described the warlike preparations of the Greeks as " too showy to be dangerous " <sup>1</sup>.

On the evening of 30th November the Admiral held a conference with the Allied Ministers, who seem to have grasped the danger of the proposed " demonstration " more clearly than he. As they did not attach importance to the deliveries of arms, they asked the Admiral whether,

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 213.

if the ten batteries were handed over, it would not be possible to abandon the rest of the demands. The admiral replied that his instructions were definite and it was for them to obtain a cancellation of these instructions from their Governments. At this moment the marshal of the Court made his appearance. He declared to the admiral that the King, feeling himself in a hopeless position, asked, like the Allied Ministers, if he would not forego the delivery of the remaining arms provided the ten batteries were handed over? The admiral replied that he could give no such promise.<sup>1</sup> The same day he received from the marshal of the Court, M. Mercati, a letter dated the evening of the previous day in which the marshal, in the name of the King, gave assurances that order would be maintained, but

*on the express condition that neither the secret police in the service of the Entente Powers nor the companies to be landed would proceed to the arrest or deportation or abduction of Greek subjects, and that the Venizelists on their part would refrain from committing acts of violence and excess which might call forth reprisals<sup>2</sup>*

This letter was an additional warning.

On the evening of 30th November, the King issued strict orders that arms were on no account to be used save in the absolute necessity of self-defence, that is, if the Allies tried to obtain possession of barracks or military depots.

It was in these circumstances that on the morning of 1st December the Admiral proceeded with his "pacific demonstration"—a term cruelly ironic. Does not the very act of marching on a neutral capital with the avowed object of disarming a neutral garrison constitute in law a deliberate provocation and indeed a formal act of war?

Meantime the wreckage was increased by the very fact of the speed acquired. The admiral insisted on the pacific nature of his "demonstration", but his staff's very orders to the landing parties were acts of war. One of these, intercepted by the Greeks and dated from the flagship 28th November, 1916, began thus:—

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p 213

<sup>2</sup> Report of the naval commission of the French Chamber

1st Naval Division,  
Squadron A.

Landing Party   Secret Order No. 13.  
Demonstration before Athens  
Operation Order

General objective of  
landing party

The landing party will establish itself, by *force of necessary*, on positions the occupation of which by our troops will constitute a *threat* to Athens, and will secure *possession of military establishments or establishments of military value* in the zone of operations. The positions in question are, etc , etc.

Accordingly, between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. on 1st December, the troops were landed according to plan. They were almost exclusively French, in all about 3,000 men. An infantry battalion remained in the outskirts of the Piræus as reserve ; the remainder marched on Athens in several columns.

The French have saddled Greece with the entire responsibility for the events of 1st December. The charge is singularly unjust. The Greeks were on their own soil, they were at home ; a foreign army presented itself at the gates of their neutral capital with the avowed aim of compelling them to give up their arms, arms which were their legitimate property and which, as in any other nation, were a first symbol of national honour. The disembarked troops thus violated an admitted right and a sentiment which permits no violation. In these circumstances the most formal logic and the most elementary justice agree in making the Allies responsible for an act of aggression.

Another question also much debated is—who fired first ? What matters, however, is to know who was the aggressor and not who fired first. According to the admiral and Captain Chamonard irregulars fired from the Theseion about 11 a.m. on the company from the “ République ”. According to the Greeks the French brought on the first collision by attacking with the bayonet the Greek troops guarding the Rouf barracks. This version accords with the secret order No. 13 quoted above.

When the first shots rang out fire was inevitably opened all along the line. At the first sounds of firing the Venizelists

and other Greeks affiliated to the French Intelligence Service tried to cause confusion in the city by firing into the backs of the Greek troops. Their intention was to provoke panic, under cover of which they hoped to seize the government offices and overthrow the regime. Evidently they believed the hour had come when they could satisfy their greed and take their revenge, by fishing profits and sinecures out of the troubled waters of civil strife. Never in all the crises of her history has Greece had worse foes than these her own citizens in revolt against their country.

At midday, although with their numerical superiority the Greek forces were masters of the situation, the King sent the Russian minister to the admiral, who was then at the Zappeion, with the offer of six batteries in order to stop the bloodshed. But about 4 p.m. the firing was violently renewed. The French maintain that it was provoked by the Greeks, while the Greeks say that they thought the Allied troops were moving on the Palace. Then the admiral ordered the warships to open fire on Athens. He gave the Stadium hill as objective, but no shell seems to have reached this point. They all fell more in the city, four near the Palace and some near the Russian and Italian Legations. The Russian and Italian Ministers had a narrow escape from the guns of their French Ally!

At 6.45 p.m. the Russian, British, and French Ministers brought to the admiral at the Zappeion the document whereby M. Lambros ratified the surrender of the six batteries and the admiral ordered the warships and the troops to cease fire. The Greeks ceased fire also.

Thus the French fleet had bombarded a neutral capital, an open city, to punish it for having dared to protect its own possessions on its own soil against an odious act of aggression ordered by representatives of France.

This deed dumbfounded neutral countries. France had pilloried the Germans for bombarding open towns, but they at least belonged to belligerents, while the French had bombarded an open town which was neutral. And the bombarded place was no common city, but one of the holy places of civilization, the source whence France herself is proud to have drawn her culture.

Meanwhile the prisoners were surrendered on both sides. The Greeks furnished the admiral with transport and ambulances and placed beds in their hospitals at his disposal for French wounded. Next day—2nd December—Count Bosdari, having learnt that the French fleet intended to repeat the crime of the bombardment of Athens, vigorously intervened and, followed by Sir F. Elliot and even by M. Guillemin, demanded of the bewildered admiral, in sharp language, that no hostile act should be committed against this open town and neutral capital without preliminary agreement with the Allied Governments. Admiral Lacaze, one of those most responsible for this sad day, said later to Dartige du Fournet that he should have “reduced Athens to ashes”.

While the Allied Ministers who had undertaken to conduct the negotiations were intervening to make the admiral abandon violent measures, the French naval attaché, without M. Guillemin’s knowledge, sent a telegram to the Rue Royale demanding instant and bloody reprisals. On 2nd December, M. Briand gave proof of his entire ignorance of the doings of his subordinates by sending this astounding telegram to M. Guillemin :—

The responsibility of the King who promised you to maintain order, and that of the Government, are obvious. To enter into discussions about the material would be a shameful act of bargaining. It is unthinkable that the odious aggression of which our troops have been the victims, at a time when we were seeking, without any intention of violence, the fulfilment of promises made spontaneously by the King, should be compensated for by the surrender of a few guns.

According to the report of the naval commission of the French Chamber this is what M. Guillemin telegraphed to Paris on 3rd December :—

Grave and dangerous situation; it would be wise to temporize to avoid reprisals on nationals, and to give them time to embark before any vigorous measures are taken if that is the intention of the Allied Governments.

The same day M. Roquefeuil sent a telegram containing this sentence, contradicting what M. Guillemin had said :—

It is necessary that severe measures of repression be taken at once the only<sup>\*</sup> possible thing is a regular bombardment of Athens.

In the afternoon he telegraphed :—

Believe that the delay in taking such measures will produce a new catastrophe French Athens School is practically evacuated. We are prisoners of the Greeks. We are packing our trunks If we do not use severe measures we shall soon be the object of reprisals

It is needless to say that all this was pure invention. Never at any moment was any Allied citizen or official disturbed in the slightest at Athens,<sup>1</sup> and at the hour when these foolish telegrams were sent everything was quiet. On 4th December the naval attaché continued to demand "terrible repression"—he sent three telegrams—and he applied this charming phrase to the Allied Ministers: "There are still among us some highly placed half-wits who believe reconciliation is possible and deny the facts I have communicated." On 5th and 6th December the naval attaché renewed his appeal to the Rue Royale, and ended by declaring that it was necessary to declare war at once on Greece. But the Allied Governments had recovered their poise, and no longer intended to let France act without them. On 8th December Admiral Dartige du Fournet notified to the Greek Government the establishment of a new blockade, a preliminary measure on which the Allies had succeeded in agreeing. On the 11th the French Government decided to relieve him of his command. This decision was taken in haste and before any inquiry, and while it punished the admiral it left scatheless the naval attaché, whose criminal activities had been for a whole year the chief cause of the complications in the Near East. But by this swift act of punishment the responsibility of the Quai d'Orsay and especially of the Rue Royale was successfully disguised.

The day's fighting had cost the French 57 killed and 154 wounded, the British not more than five killed and several wounded (they had orders not to take part in the fighting).

<sup>1</sup> Captain Chamonard's evidence before the naval commission of the French Chamber.

The Italians had taken care to withdraw the moment firing began. Thus in the end the operation was seen to be due, as it really was, solely to French initiative. The Greek casualties were 30 killed and 52 wounded<sup>1</sup> by the French ; 11 killed and 12 wounded (some of them<sup>2</sup> civilians) by the Venizelists. The Venizelists had three<sup>3</sup> killed and two wounded.

Be it noted finally that the Greeks never at any time thought of searching the Ecole Française ; they would have raised a terrible scandal if they had shown to the world that M. de Roquetaillade had made it a veritable arsenal. On the other hand, a search was made of M. Venizelos' house, and 15 bombs, 66 rifles, 59 revolvers, thousands of cartridges and a quantity of dynamite were found. It is significant that most of these bore the official marks of the French army.

It was the telegrams, letters, and reports of M. de Roquetaillade which were mainly responsible for exaggerating and distorting what happened, and for giving an importance it did not possess<sup>1</sup> to this smallest of episodes in the greatest military drama ever known. He it was who stirred up the Paris Press ; "a phrase," says Dartige du Fournet<sup>2</sup> "invented by the naval attaché appeared in all the papers—'Athenian Vespers'. The phrase had all the irrelevance and inaccuracy of so many alleged historic phrases. Not a single instance came to my knowledge of any Allied civilian being molested." Count Bosdari writes that the official and semi-official warnings from the Greeks that they would not deliver up their arms were so frank and explicit that it is "absurd to speak of an *ambush* as the French did at the time and have continued to do in recent publications."<sup>3</sup>

Not to mention the arrival on the scene of General Sarrail would be to omit the heroï-comic note. As soon as he heard of the events at Athens—needless to say, he heard of them from the naval attaché—he asked leave "to throw his sword into the balance".<sup>4</sup> Sarrail, who had never had enough

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Bosdari, op. cit. p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Sarrail, p. 195.

troops to hold the Germans and Bulgars, now found he had entire divisions at his disposal "to take the offensive : direction—Larissa—Athens". Like Don Quixote, he wanted to go and fight windmills. Here at least he could gather laurels, for Greece had hardly an army and no arms !

It must be pointed out that, unlike those raging Press articles, the report of the naval commission of the French Chamber contains nowhere the slightest allusion to the responsibility of Constantine for the events of 1st December. The report ends thus :—

The Commission protests against the acts unworthy of an officer of which M. de Roquenfeul was guilty in order to justify and support a personal policy and to realize aims completely at variance with those of his Government. Consequently, while admitting that the removal from duty of Admiral Dartige du Fournet was justified, it demands that severe action be taken against Commandant de Roquenfeul for grave dereliction of duty.

These conclusions were adopted unanimously by the commission in its session of 25th September, 1919 ; but, afraid to recall to public knowledge the shameful acts committed by the French, the Government did its best to bury the report.

### VIII

On 3rd December calm was restored in Athens. But the London and Paris newspapers did not say so. Instead they took extraordinary trouble, especially those of Paris, to convince their readers that Constantine had treacherously drawn the Allied sailors into an ambush to massacre them. What furious eloquence was used to enforce this view ! What curses, what cries of vengeance, were uttered against a small nation unjustly attacked !

In vain did the King and his Government try to appeal to facts and to the text of the Benazet agreement to show that if engagements had been violated it was not on their side. The censorship would allow only the accusers to speak. At the end of their resources, the Greek Government proposed to the Allies the setting up of a Commission to inquire into

the events of 1st December<sup>1</sup>; there was no result. The accusers avoided impartial investigation.

Scarcely had news of the events of 1st December reached Paris when M. Briand, without awaiting a full report, which would establish the responsibility for them, proposed to the Allies that Constantine should be dethroned. The credulous masses in France, always seeking scapegoats, were made to believe that "the brother-in-law of the Kaiser" had assassinated French sailors. They were therefore clamouring for the punishment of the King.

According to the official Russian documents, the following was the course of the negotiations which led to the refusal of M. Briand's proposal. M. Neratov, Director-General of the Russian Foreign Ministry, telegraphed on 4th December<sup>2</sup> to the Russian Ambassador in London :—

The governments of France and Britain must surely know that we could not agree to any steps being taken against the King and the dynasty. In any case, in our opinion, the French proposal is impracticable because of the undeniable attachment of the army and people of old Greece to the person of the King.

On the same day M. Briand made his proposal. It was thus reported on by Isvolsky in a telegram to Petrograd dated 4th December.<sup>2</sup>

Briand has just telegraphed in effect as follows to Petrograd, London, and Rome: The French Government is of opinion that there can be no question of declaring war on Greece, as a part of the Greek nation is fighting on the side of the Allies. But the Allies ought to demand compensation for the outrage of which they have been the victims, and guarantees for the future. Compensation would be obtained by the dethronement of King Constantine and the recognition of Venizelos. In this action the French Government has no desire to attack either the Greek Constitution or the monarchist regime but on the contrary is seeking to re-establish constitutional government, an impossibility while Constantine is on the throne as he is completely under the influence of his pro-German entourage.

<sup>1</sup> Telegrams from M. Zalokostas to the Greek Legations of 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th December; telegrams from the Greek Legation at Paris of 7th and 15th December, from the London Legation of 16th December.

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

The French Ambassadors in London and Petrograd were asked to urge the adoption of this plan, while the Ambassador in Rome was asked to assure the Consulta that "the recognition of Venizelos would be made only with the formal consent of Italy, and that no engagement in favour of Greece would be entered into with him".

On 5th and 6th December the Allied replies arrived in Paris. On 5th December M. Neratov telegraphed to Isvolsky (telegram No. 5,145) :—

We think that the French proposals for a change of regime in Greece, to be carried through by foreign bayonets, are inopportune and practically unrealizable in view of the clearly expressed sympathy of the army and the nation for the King.

On the same day the Russian Ambassador in Rome reported to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> Sonnino's reply to the French Ambassador :—

Sonnino thinks that the Allies ought not to make such a demand. He believes that the Allies exaggerate the importance of Venizelos, who is not supported by a majority, and that they are allowing themselves to be diverted from their primary object, which is the defeat of the enemy, by occupying themselves with the affairs of Greece, which are only of secondary importance.

This dispatch has this marginal note: "True," in the handwriting of Nicholas II, dated from Russian G.H.Q., 25th November (o.s.).

On 6th December Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, telegraphed<sup>1</sup> :—

Cambon informs me confidentially that he has just sounded Grey on the proposals to dethrone Constantine and to recognize Venizelos. Grey rejected both . . I learn besides from the Foreign Office that Briand's plans have not been approved, that the *de facto* recognition of Venizelos in the zone which he occupies is considered to be ample, and that there are many objections to the dethronement of Constantine. As a guarantee of Allied security Britain proposes a blockade of Greece.

On 7th December, in face of their unanimous rejection

by the Allies, Briand abandoned his plans against Constantine. Isvolsky sent this information to Petrograd the same day<sup>1</sup> :—

Briand has just told me that he learns from the French and British Ambassadors in Petrograd that your objection to his proposals is not only on the ground that they have no practical utility and are inopportune, but that the main ground of your objection is perhaps that you see in the dethronement of Constantine a blow against monarchy itself. In these circumstances the French Government no longer insists on the measures proposed. As, however, in the attack which took place French blood was shed, France cannot remain without satisfaction.

After the departure of Dartige du Fournet it was to Admiral Gauchet that the task fell of applying the blockade—"a pacific blockade" as the jurists call it. This is a more subtle and elegant form of massacre. Instead of the victim's throat being cut he is made to die of starvation. The torture inflicted is far more cruel, but as the act of murder is masked certain hypocritical scruples of our modern civilization are quietened.

The Greeks received the blockade as an infliction to which they were accustomed. They resigned themselves to it with calm dignity. They understood that all the French bullying had but one aim, to deliver over a defenceless Greece to "the traitor Venizelos".

Finally, on 14th December, having at last reached agreement among themselves, the Allies presented an ultimatum to Greece which began by exonerating the King and his Government. To guarantee "the security of their armies" the Allied Governments demanded that with the briefest possible delay practically all the Greek army and material of war should be transported to the Peloponnese—they refrained from renewing the demand for the surrender of arms—and fixed a time limit of twenty-four hours within which Greece had to accept this ultimatum. They ended their Note thus :—

The blockade will be maintained until the Greek Government has made complete reparation for the recent unprovoked (*sic*)

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book.

attack by the Greek forces against the Allied troops, and until sufficient guarantees for the future have been given

In order to know their determination, the British and French Ministers went on board the warships to be ready to leave in the event of a Greek refusal, and the French admiral told the inhabitants of the Piræus to remain indoors because the bombardment of Athens was imminent. Yet Athens was still a *neutral* city and an *open* town.

Naturally the ultimatum was at once accepted ; but a complementary ultimatum was at once announced. It was to be sent as soon as the Allies were agreed on the details.

Meanwhile the British and French newspapers were filled with false reports coming from Salonica. They stirred up public feeling by declaring that hundreds, even thousands, of Venizelists had been shot in Greece. There is nothing astonishing in this when one reads the stuff that Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd on 20th December.<sup>1</sup>

J. Cambon informs me that a great number of indications have been collected here showing the existence of an agreement between Germany and Constantine with a view to military co-operation, and the preparations of the Greek military authorities to that end. These are entirely confirmed by a wireless message from William II to Queen Sophia, recently intercepted.

The ill-conceived propaganda fell heavily on those who had organized it. It overwhelmed the French Government with lies sent by its own agents.

Meanwhile the Anglo-French fleet took advantage of the delay caused by the disagreement between the Allied Governments to force several of the islands, including Syra, to submit to the Venizelists, and refused, despite the protest of their inhabitants, to restore them to the legal government. To justify this refusal the propaganda service succeeded in filling the London and Paris papers with stories of the enthusiasm of the "liberated" islanders.

At the end of December the anger in Greece against Venizelos had risen to such a height that the Government, under the pressure of public opinion, issued a warrant for

\* Russian White Book

his arrest for high treason. This step, the legality of which was undeniable, roused foreign indignation to the highest pitch—that of *The Times* particularly. At the same time the Athens mob revived an old Byzantine custom. The whole city went to the Field of Mars, where with the help of the clergy it pronounced “anathema and malediction against the traitor Venizelos who has rent the country in twain”.

At this moment a flood of telegrams from Salonica inundated the newspaper offices of Paris and London, denouncing the Greek acceptance of the ultimatum of 14th December as a trap.

On 31st December the Allies, having at last reached an agreement, delivered a Note at Athens complementary to the ultimatum of the 14th. It called for the transport of the Greek army and its material to the Peloponnesus, the re-establishment of the controls which the Allies had given up after 1st December, the immediate liberation of all Venizelists in prison for political offences, or on a charge of high treason, and their indemnification in agreement with the Allies, and finally the saluting of the Allied flags in a public square in Athens. But in compensation the Allies

formally pledged themselves not to allow the forces of the Government of National Defence to take advantage of the retreat of the Royal troops from Thessaly and Epirus to cross the neutral zone

Finally the blockade of the Greek coast was to be maintained until satisfaction had been obtained on all the counts mentioned.

What most of all irritated Greek opinion in the Note was the demand for the liberation without trial and the indemnification of the seditious Venizelists. By this demand was proved the astonishing claim of foreign Powers to protect on Greek soil rebels against the laws of Greece.

During this time the Press campaign organized in France with incredible perfidy against the King for remaining neutral was tirelessly pursued. Telegrams from Salonica declared that the King intended to join the Germans and Bulgars, that he was secretly mobilizing, that he was deluding the Allies, that he thought only of making war on the

Protecting Powers, that he was massacring the Venizelists. Only the Italian Press continued, to the great annoyance of certain circles in Paris, to give an accurate version of affairs in Greece.

On 6th January, 1917, the Allies met in conference at Rome and the question of evacuating Salonica was discussed. Despite the efforts of Britain and Italy, the proposal to do so was negatived, owing to the obstinate resistance of France, for whom Eastern affairs were more than ever mixed up with internal political rivalries.

As will be seen later, Greece alone fulfilled the conditions of the ultimatum. Gradually, under French pressure, the Entente Powers found pretexts for violating their pledges and aiding the extension of Venizelism.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Venizelist Government, faithful to its old methods, worked on Allied nerves with new fantasies. It malignantly alleged, for instance, that the shells with which the Bulgars were bombarding the Allied troops were those "which the Royal Government had handed over at Cavalla".

On 25th January Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd the programme of the Allied military control commission, presided over by the French general Caboue, with the help of Commandant de Roquetaillade, "who, despite his recall, still remains in Greece." After stating that the French predominated in this commission, Demidov said:—

In conclusion, although this programme is clearly dictated by imperious military necessity, it is uncontested that it breathes a disquieting spirit of intransigence which promises many abuses and incidents. It seems certain, moreover, that the control will not be suspended after the execution by Greece of the military clauses of the ultimatum, but will go on functioning in one form or another until the end of the war. The British do not disguise their displeasure at such measures.

On 30th January the Russian Embassy in Paris telegraphed to Petrograd that the French Government was strongly opposing the Allied proposal to raise or even to lighten

<sup>1</sup> Even *The Times*, at this moment so hostile to Greece, explicitly admitted at the end of January that she had loyally executed the demands.

the blockade of Greece. At the most it would consent only to local and restricted entry of food.<sup>1</sup>

About 15th February the French representatives in Athens had to admit that as the Greek army was in the Peloponnese Sarrai had nothing more to fear ; but they hastened to discount the good impression thus created by adding that the Allies were none the less displeased at the manner in which Greece was executing the ultimatum ; the Reservists' Leagues, they said, were not really dissolved, arms were still concealed, the Greek Press was hostile, and finally, the Venizelists did not feel themselves secure (*sic*) !

The blockade, meanwhile, was beginning to be cruelly felt. Shortage of food was producing epidemics ; old people and children were succumbing in great numbers, especially the new-born, whom their mothers were unable to feed. The people were convinced that Venizelos was the instigator of the blockade from which they were dying, and threats were to be heard against his supporters. M. Guillemin retorted with a ferocious counter-threat. M. Demidov telegraphed this report to Petrograd on 16th February<sup>1</sup> :—

Yesterday the French Minister declared to the Premier that if any Venizelists were molested the French admiral would not hesitate to bombard Athens, and this time with more effect than when Dartige du Fournet did the same

On 17th February Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> that the British Ambassador had sent this memorandum to M. Jules Cambon :—

Lord Balfour requests the French Government to give instructions to the French admiral to abstain from any bombardment of Athens without first consulting the Allies.

On the same day the Russian Ambassador in Rome telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Bosdari has declined to join his colleagues in the new Allied Note to be sent to Athens, for in spite of the excitement in the country he considers that the Allied demands are being carried out fairly honestly. Sonnino, in telling me this, said that the very first thing was to prevent deaths from starvation, for such incidents (and the

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book.

bombardment of Athens equally so) would turn American opinion against us, and would compel Wilson to intervene in favour of the Greeks, at the very moment when his goodwill towards us is particularly needed.

The same Ambassador reported on 19th February that the advice given to Paris by Petrograd and Rome to mitigate the blockade had failed of effect in consequence of the attitude of Sarrail, who desired a rupture with Greece. On the 22nd Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

In addition to the Italians the British agents in Greece, including Elliot, are showing great dislike of the French proceedings, and are indignant against Sarrail. While endeavouring to avoid compromising themselves, they are openly opposing our hot-headed Allies, they are discounting the arguments, generally mistaken, of the French agents in Greece, and trying to prevent precipitate decisions, such as that to bombard Athens, an august monument of art and an open town—an act which would have indelibly stained the Allied flags.

The efforts to strangle neutral Greece were carried to brutal lengths. A new and ultra-sensational report from Salonica was quoted as follows in the editorial column of the *Temps* of 16th February, 1917 :—

A telegram from Salonica announces that William II has sent the following wireless message to his brother-in-law. "There is no need for you to intervene. All that I am asking you is that you will retain your throne."

For months the whole of the French Press made great play with this piece of news. Need it be said that no such message was ever sent or received ? There is no trace of it even in Venizelos' White Books. The King did his utmost to secure the contradiction of this calumny in Paris through M. Guillemin, but, as the latter himself said to the Court Chamberlain, M. Mercati, the Paris censorship denied the King the right of reply. And yet many French papers regarded the absence of a denial as a confirmation of the telegram !

The blockade began to produce an alarming amount of unemployment, and the daily ration of uneatable bread fell

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, telegram from Athens No. 98

to an eighth of a kilogram. The shops were emptied of goods and of customers. The small earners who live from day to day were plunged into destitution. They lived on figs, dried raisins, and locust beans. To intensify the famine the French admiral chased away the fishing vessels, and only released their crews if they undertook to turn over to the Venizelists. His officers even sank the boats of these<sup>t</sup> unfortunates to punish them for preferring peace to war. When they very naturally protested, the French officers replied : "If you want us to leave you in peace, send away your King!"<sup>1</sup>

The few cargoes of wheat which arrived in Greece were sent on to Salonica, and M. Venizelos made use of them to try to buy the adhesion of the famished regions to his movement.

It is right, however, to mention that as soon as the British Government learned of the appearance of famine in Greece it took steps to succour this unhappy country, though not without lively objections from the French. Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd on 25th February<sup>2</sup> :—

The British Ambassador has just sent here the Balfour proposal for the urgent supply of food to the Greek populations, it proposes the immediate lifting of the blockade. . . Briand has replied through Paul Cambon that France accepts the temporary measures proposed by Balfour, but refuses to agree to any modification of the blockade, since Greece has not yet fulfilled her engagements

But France took care not to say what were the engagements which had not been fulfilled.

On 16th March the British Legation announced the arrival at the Piræus of 3,300 tons of wheat ; it was the first arrival for three months, and was but a small supply, "intended exclusively for the prevention of deaths from starvation." The torture by hunger was inexorably to go on.

At the end of March British philanthropists made their voice heard in the House of Commons. The reply was given to them that steps had been taken for the partial revictualling of the country, but that the blockade would be maintained. It could, indeed, only be raised with the unanimous consent

<sup>1</sup> Telegram from Zalokostas to the Greek Legations in the Allied capitals, 16th February ; Note to the French Minister in Athens, 29th March, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book.

of the Allies, and the French Government would not let it be raised at any price.

In March, 1917, the Tsar had abdicated, and at the beginning of April the United States entered the war; these two new factors rendered Greece's position desperate. Those in France who had decided to impose Venizelos on her by main force now had an easy task; there were no more fears of neutral criticism or of Russian displeasure; nothing remained to do but to overcome British resistance.

It was at this time that the Ribot Ministry was formed in France. Isvolsky reported Ribot's attitude towards Greece on 30th March<sup>1</sup> :—

After the change in Russia Ribot shows his intention of dethroning King Constantine, if not by direct Allied intervention, then by giving more effective support to the Venizelists.

On 7th April, on the occasion of the Greek national fête, Athens and the whole of free Greece bore witness to their unshakeable devotion and affection for the "martyr King". These demonstrations greatly irritated the representatives of France, and drove them irresistibly to lay their hands on what remained of Greek liberties. On the 11th the *Temps* published the worst editorial attack which it had ever made on King Constantine. This semi-official article, entitled "Le dossier du roi de Grèce", was simply a mass of absurd and wholly baseless allegations. Count Bosdari<sup>2</sup> speaks of it with indignation. It was written by the Deputy who later was the draughtsman of the Treaty of Versailles, and it defined and summarized the monstrous policy which France had just adopted with regard to Greece and to Constantine.

On 31st March the Paris papers reported that the island of Zante had revolted against the "tyranny" of Constantine and had adhered with enthusiasm to the "liberating" movement of Venizelos. A little later it was reported that Cephalonia, Skiathos, Cerigo, and so on, had adhered with the same enthusiasm to the Salonica Government. On each occasion the Paris papers were prodigal of praise of these brave islanders who had succeeded in shaking off the yoke of Constantine! Yet it is not too much to say

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book.

<sup>2</sup> Bosdari, op cit, p 189

that these islanders one and all execrated Venizelos. To secure the adhesion of the Greek islands the French navy began invariably with cutting off their food supply until they were starving ; then it landed Senegalese, who arrested the authorities and invited the few Venizelists to take over the administration. Under the protection of the negroid soldiers the Venizelists then proclaimed the dethronement of the King !<sup>1</sup>

In other cases the Allies brought a boat laden with corn and with Venizelist gendarmes, who said to the islanders : “ Be our brothers, or you shall die of hunger.” At Leucas the population replied that it refused bread “ brought by traitors ”, which obliged the French admiral to make this island “ adhere ” at the end of May by main force !

On 5th April, 1917, dealing with the question of inter-allied controls, of which France was making so much, Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd that London had no sympathy for this measure, and that the British Minister was proposing to make important modifications in it.

On the 17th Demidov mentioned the rumour of the impending formation of a new Cabinet more favourable to the Entente, and added :—

Everyone here is asking what it is that France wants The Greeks, I believe, are ready for further capitulations provided that the King is left untouched. My British colleague and I are convinced that so long as France is in command here normal relations with Greece are impossible Elliot has suggested to London that Britain should take control of Greek affairs, that General Sarrail, whose every move is to be distrusted, should be recalled, and that the British admiral should assume command of the Allied fleet , the effect would be particularly fortunate for our cause both here and in the Mediterranean in general

On 19th April Demidov telegraphed again to Petrograd<sup>2</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> Count Bosdari confirms this account. Writing on these particular incidents, he says that after the French had occupied Cephalonia and Zante and handed these islands over to Venizelos, M Guillemin asked him to sign a note declaring that these islands had “ spontaneously revolted against King Constantine—a shameless lie which I refused to sign ” (Bosdari, pp 189–191)

<sup>2</sup> Russian White Book Telegram written 18th but dispatched 19th.

To-day, 18th April, the King sent for the British Minister and told him that he is ready to change the Government if he is assured that the French are not aiming at his dethronement or at an invasion of his territory ; in either of these cases he would be compelled to resist. He mentioned as Premier Dimitrakopoulos, Kalogeropoulos, and especially Zaimis.

On 21st April Isvolsky telegraphed<sup>1</sup> an account of the conference at Saint-Jean de Maurienne. The essential result of this conference was that Ribot at last succeeded in obtaining from Lloyd George and Sonnino "a liberty of action for France in Greece, which did not exclude the possibility of the dethronement of King Constantine". Isvolsky omitted, however, to mention that Lloyd George only admitted the possibility of this in the event of Venizelists being massacred in Athens. At the conference Lloyd George and Sonnino were resolutely opposed to a republic being set up in Greece. The main argument which Ribot used to overcome the resistance of his allies was the alleged immobilization of Sarrail by the fact that he had to keep two divisions to guard his rear from Constantine !

Since 9th April Sarrail had been urging the vice-admiral at Salamis, on the strength of vague rumours, to bombard Athens "without warning and without evacuating the population—fire on the Royal Palace and the barracks and only cease fire when the King and the Government have come to offer you their surrender at Salamis"! The admiral, however, had regarded this as uncalled-for, and had not complied with it. Sarrail inferred that the navy was conspiring against him.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Venizelos, needing an excuse for the failure of his so-called national mobilization, complained that the neutral zone was preventing his supporters in Thessaly from joining him. Here fortune again came to his aid. The crops had already been brought in in Thessaly. The feeding of the Eastern army had become particularly difficult owing to its size and to the submarine war, and the idea of seizing these crops at the very gates of Salonica tempted the Allied Governments. On 24th April Isvolsky telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book

<sup>2</sup> Sarrail, op cit., pp 238 and 392-3.

I have communicated to Ribot the sense of your telegrams Nos. 1,504 and 1,505. In reply he confirmed that he is insisting on a more energetic policy in regard to Greece, a policy which envisages ultimately the dethronement of Constantine. He added that while the French Government could not oppose the will of the Greeks to set up a republic, "a regime to which I suppose that Russia would not now object," it has no desire for so profound a modification of the Greek constitutional régime, since the changing of the occupant of the throne would be certain to bring Venizelos to power.

"On this last point," Ribot added, "you may give your Minister formal assurances, France will assume no engagement towards Venizelos in regard to the vast nationalist ambitions of the Greeks; France will take no decision without first agreeing with Russia." I replied that while I did not question the intentions of the French Government I feared that Venizelos' return to power would reawaken in French intellectual and political circles the old philhellenism which was the cause of the unfortunate solution of the Cavalla question. Ribot replied that *it was now fully realized that the assignment of this post to Greece was a mistake*,<sup>1</sup> and in view of the unfortunate results of this event there was no reason to fear a return of philhellenism.

Several politicians and journalists besides Ribot have given me the same assurance. Jules Cambon gave this definition of the future relations between France and Venizelos: "*Nothing serves us better than to accumulate grounds of ill-feeling and friction with Greece, in order to disembarrass ourselves of all moral obligations towards that country*"

This is one of the most striking documents in the Russian White Book; it reveals all the ugly cynicism of secret diplomacy. It affords tangible proof of the deliberate lying by which, while deifying Venizelos and hellenism in order to exploit them, a hateful formula of betrayal was being elaborated against them.

In April Sarrail was authorized by his Government to invade Thessaly and seize the harvest, but he was prevented from doing so by the offensive against the Bulgarians, and it was not until May that he proceeded to seize the crops. Alarmed at this event, the King asked M. Lambros to resign and charged M. Zaimis with the formation of a Cabinet; it was his last resource.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the support which France and Germany gave to the Greek claim to Cavalla in 1913. Russia at the time wanted to give Cavalla to Bulgaria.

## IX

Count Bosdari relates at length the mischief done by the intrigues of General Caboue, the French head of the inter-allied controls. His "obstructiveness and insolence reached such a pitch that they became the subject of dismayed exchanges of view<sup>s</sup> between the Italian, British, and Russian Cabinets".<sup>1</sup>

As soon as he had been placed at the head of the government of Greece by foreign troops, M. Venizelos made a great effort to substantiate the lies with which he had surrounded himself. We have already spoken of the many editions of a White Book containing the telegrams exchanged between Athens and various belligerent capitals, each of which, according to its compiler, brought fresh proof of the treachery of his opponents. Without spending time on demonstrating the doubtful nature of many of these documents, let us quote the following summary of the White Book made by Mr. G. P. Gooch,<sup>2</sup> who is far from being hostile to Venizelos :

The most sensational items were the confidential communications of the King and Queen with the Kaiser during the winter of 1916–1917. After the fateful collision with Entente troops outside Athens on 1st December, 1916, Queen Sophia in desperation turned to her brother and inquired when the offensive against the Entente army in the Balkans would begin. The Kaiser replied with a command to attack Sarrail's left wing, to which the Queen rejoined that the distance was too great, and that an attack would only become possible if Sarrail was driven south by the Central Powers. On 6th January, 1917, Constantine, answering an inquiry of Hindenburg, explained that Greece would be crushed the moment she began to move, and inquired of Hindenburg whether an offensive against Sarrail was contemplated. To this question no reply was received.

Is it so extraordinary that Queen Sophia, when she saw her palace bombarded by the French fleet and her children in danger, should have asked her brother to help her? The cry for help of a woman and a mother when she sees her home assailed is a human and natural movement.

<sup>1</sup> Bosdari, *op cit*, p. 188

<sup>2</sup> *Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy*, London, 1927, p. 120.

## CHAPTER XII

### THIRD ZAIMIS MINISTRY

(4th May—26th June, 1917)

Before the dethronement of King Constantine—M. Jonnart “High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers”.—Deposition of King Constantine—After the Deposition of King Constantine.—M. Jonnart’s contradictions and admissions, he imposes M. Venizelos on the “liberated” Greek people as dictator and tyrant.—Afterthoughts of M. Jonnart on his action in Greece.—After M. Jonnart’s departure.

#### I

For the third time in two years King Constantine had recourse to the services of M. Zaimis, the only non-Venizelist politician who had escaped the charge of pro-Germanism.

On 13th May, M. Izkoul, the Russian chargé d’affaires in Athens, telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

Our Minister saw Zaimis on the 28th/11th. Zaimis told him that his programme consisted of vast concessions to the Entente “I am in a position to tire France out with concessions,” he said. But he complains that no one but the British Minister has promised to support him. He let it be understood that he is aware of the French intention to dethrone the King.

As soon as he came to power, M. Zaimis informed the Allied Ministers not only of his resolve to co-operate with them, but even of his desire to work for a reconciliation between the King and M. Venizelos. The latter, alarmed as on all similar occasions at the prospect of a rapprochement between Athens and the Entente, set his wits to work to wreck M. Zaimis’ effort. On 17th May M. de Billy, the French Minister accredited to M. Venizelos, telegraphed to the Quai d’Orsay that the provisional government was greatly disturbed at the sudden effort of M. Guillemin to introduce

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

a spirit of moderation into the Venizelist Press in Athens and at the efforts of the latter to second Zaimis in his policy of conciliation. He added :—

The Provisional Government is asking itself whether this attitude of Guillemin is in accord with the views of the French Government. The opponents of the Entente and of Venizelos are already growing arrogant

The British Government had been working at the time to secure a reconciliation between Venizelos and King Constantine. Thus on 20th April M. de Billy telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay :—

Lord Granville<sup>1</sup> has been instructed to see whether there is any possibility of a reconciliation between Venizelos and the King. Venizelos shows absolute repugnance to the idea. According to him the King must be forced to abdicate and leave the country. If necessary Venizelos would support the Crown Prince, but he would prefer a British Prince

On this occasion M. Venizelos manœuvred with rare ability to circumvent the British Minister and to paralyse the efforts of the London Government.

When Venizelos became afraid of irritating foreign Powers, without whose support he would no longer have been able to strangle his fellow-citizens, he declared that he would be willing to give way “if his friends the Powers insisted”. When Lord Granville hinted that if the Powers failed in their efforts to reconcile the two Greces they might lose all interest in Venizelism, the Cretan politician replied very shrewdly :—

I refuse to believe that the Powers could break their promises to me. If they *should* do so, I should be compelled to admit defeat, since I should have to face not only the Germans, the Bulgarians, and King Constantine, but also the guaranteeing Powers’ breach of faith. In any case I could not accept a reconciliation which would be immoral and disastrous for my country

On 10th/23rd May Venizelos, fearing that Britain was becoming increasingly irritated with him, made a feigned

<sup>1</sup> Lord Granville was the British diplomatic representative accredited to M. Venizelos at Salonica.

movement of lofty abnegation and left Granville free to accept Constantine's alliance "for the duration of the war". At the same time, however, he took care to disturb the diplomat with continual references to Constantine's "bad faith". By 12th/25th May Granville was entirely hoodwinked by the Cretan politician; he candidly confided to him on that day that he had not ventured to say any more about conciliation to London!

Finally it should be mentioned that when Venizelos, disposing of Greece as though she were his sole property, asked Granville for a British prince to reign over her, Granville replied that "the throne of Greece was not solid enough for a British prince".

Venizelos knew perfectly how to take advantage through the Press of the heated state of European opinion. At a signal from him the French and many of the British papers set up a deafening cry against Constantine. They took up one by one all the odious calumnies, all the exploded lies, all the sophisms with which truth had been mauled for two years past. Entente propaganda, powerful, tenacious, setting its teeth, sent out into the world tales audaciously twisted as never before. The French papers relegated the Western front to their inside pages in order to occupy themselves entirely with Constantine and Venizelos. They declared that the Zaimis Cabinet was nothing but a fresh trap set for the Entente by Constantine, acting "under the Kaiser's orders". In London *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* were filled with fantastic stories from Venizelist sources of Constantine's infernal designs. These authorities declared that the King was going to attack the Allies as soon as the harvest in Thessaly had been got in!<sup>1</sup>

The French papers had telegrams sent to them from Athens that "mysterious plans were being devised there against the Allies; but what these were had not yet been discovered"! The tiniest chance incident, real or imagined, was interpreted as "a sure index of the most widespread and perfidious of conspiracies". On the strength of all these extravagances the Allied Press was unanimous in considering the situation "very grave"! The constant

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 8th and 30th May; *Daily Mail*, 9th and 30th May, 1917.

refrain in Paris was "The King's pretended neutrality has all along been the cover for the worst of complicity with the enemy and the gravest of danger to Sarrail's rear". And radical remedies were demanded.

In a word, the conviction had been acquired in France that Greek cannon fodder was only to be had by dethroning the King. For a long time the rulers of France had counted on Venizelos to secure this, but their hope had been disappointed through the unpopularity which his interventionist policy had brought him. To bring Greece in as an ally there remained no alternative but to resort to force, and M. Ribot proceeded to arrange this.

## II

On 28th May M. Ribot, accompanied by M. Painlevé, went to London to submit to the British Government his plan for "the radical solution" of the Greek question. The two Ministers again met with obstacles in British scruples, and once more they set themselves to show that however legitimate the scruples might be, scruples must not outweigh interests. At last the British began to give way under the French pressure, but they objected to a dethronement with bloodshed. The French reassured them with an undertaking that the operation should be carried out without acts of war. The only military measure to which the London Cabinet gave its assent was the occupation of the Isthmus of Corinth, to prevent the Greek army interned in the Peloponnesus from coming to the King's support.

The extent of the incredible confusion between the Allies may be gauged from the following telegram, dated 25th May, from the Russian Ambassador in Rome<sup>1</sup> :—

Sonnino has just informed me confidentially that the British have announced to him that after the occupation of Thessaly and the seizure of the crops the blockade of Greece will be lifted, that one British division and two brigades will be transferred from Macedonia to Egypt, and that the Eastern army will evacuate Macedonia and content itself with holding the town of Salonica.

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

The Ambassador telegraphed again on 1st June, 1917<sup>1</sup> :—

The French Ambassador has just informed Sonnino of the agreement arrived at between France and Britain in regard to the Greek question. After the occupation of Thessaly and the distribution of the crops, the proposal will be made to Constantine that he should leave Greece. If he refuses the blockade will be tightened and the Isthmus of Corinth will be occupied by the French. Jonnart will be appointed Commissioner of the Protecting Powers at Athens. Sarrail and the Allied representatives will be under his orders. The same communication was made to Sonnino by the British Ambassador; but he added that a prince of the royal house would succeed Constantine. Sonnino told me that he declared to both Ministers that the agreement conflicted with the decisions taken at Saint-Jean de Maurienne, in which there was no question of dethroning Constantine except in the event of massacres occurring in Athens. Not only has there been no such event, but the anti-Entente Lambros Cabinet has given way to the much more friendly Zaimis Cabinet.

On 4th June Teretchenko, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, telegraphed to Paris and London (telegram No. 2,332) :—

I think the immediate carrying out of the Anglo-French plan for a change of regime in Greece is both inopportune and dangerous, not only is there no present justification for it in any exceptional occurrence, but it is by no means in conformity with general Allied interests.

On the same day Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

France's action in Greece is not in accord with my conception of political morality and cannot be justified by any consideration of the general interest. . . In trying now to impose Venizelos on Old Greece, and in the inconceivable blockade which has been maintained for six months past, we are transgressing not only against our solemn undertakings in regard to Greece, whom we have definitely disarmed, but in addition, in my opinion, the Allies are flouting the ideal of liberty and of the free self-determination of small nations which they have proclaimed throughout the world.

The execution of this violent action was entrusted by France to M. Charles Jonnart, who made use of the unauthorized

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

title of High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers of Greece, and set off for Greece to establish there "truth to the Constitution". The pseudo-legal formula under which his interference in Greek domestic affairs was to be justified was as follows :—

His Majesty King Constantine having manifestly violated the Constitution of which France, Great Britain, and Russia are the guarantors, I have the honour to declare that the King has lost the confidence of the Protecting Powers, who consider themselves released from the obligations towards him arising out of their rights of protection.<sup>1</sup>

This formula was doubly illegal, firstly because the three Powers named had no right of protection over Greece, as has already been shown,<sup>2</sup> and secondly because even supposing them to have had such a right, they had not invested M. Jonnart with the authority which he exercised in their names. M. Jonnart was only the "High Commissioner" of France. He had received no mandate from Britain ; the London Cabinet did no more than tolerate his mission at first, on conditions, and subject also to the reservation of the right to disavow him in case of complications. Moreover, when the hour came for action the Foreign Office, in its Notes of 8th and 9th June, formally requested the Quai d'Orsay to suspend action through M. Jonnart. As will be seen later, M. Ribot took no notice of this. Moreover, Russia protested from the first against M. Jonnart's mission, and energetically disavowed his action, which was taken with the unauthorized use of her name. This new and monstrous interference in Greek affairs had thus no more basis in law than any of those which had preceded it since 1915. The dethronement of King Constantine had just been decided on not because it was legally or morally justified, but because France insisted on it and Britain had her reasons for not wishing to let her act alone in Greece.

M. Jonnart then set off ; he went to Corfu, to Salamis, and to Salonica, and settled first with Admiral Gauchet and then with Sarrail the military measures to be taken

<sup>1</sup> Phrase taken from the text of the ultimatum sent by M. Jonnart on 11th June to M. Zaimis.

<sup>2</sup> See page 100.

and the details of the invasion of Thessaly, which was to take place parallel with his action. At Salonica M. Jonnart also conferred with M. Venizelos, who declared his approval of the French senator's plan. All the required military measures were taken on a grand scale against little Greece in order to crush her if she attempted to defend herself.

Meanwhile General Sarrail inundated Paris with incredible messages about Greek conspiracies and traps set for him. Nobody is so easy to dupe as a fanatic ; every sign of Greek inclination to self-defence against Venizelos became in Sarrail's eyes "a threat against him". If he were to be believed, Thessaly was one vast military arsenal. How absurd all this was was seen on the day of M. Jonnart's ultimatum : Greece submitted to the most unspeakable of outrages for want of means of self-defence.

Sarrail also accused the British of having done everything possible at Salonica to prevent the King's abdication, and of only unwillingly supplying him with 500 soldiers for the descent on Thessaly. According to him the British Chief of Staff had been trying to discover his plans "in order to telegraph them and ruin our action". Finally he accused the British Legation of having "gratuitously divulged to the King of Greece what had been decided on in regard to him".<sup>1</sup> In short, General Sarrail breathed against all the world the invectives of a maniac.

How fatal General Sarrail's action in Greece was to French interests may be judged by the part which this general played in Syria ten years later. In the midst of peace he nearly lost France that province, and by his method of repression aroused the indignation of the civilized world. The French Press was then almost unanimous in branding him as a muddler and a man incapable of a consistent and restrained policy.<sup>2</sup> King Constantine could not receive in his tomb more distinguished homage from this Press which had formerly so outraged him in Sarrail's interest.

At the beginning of June there was a certain lull in the violent French Press campaign against Greece. It was the calm that precedes the storm.

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, pp. 230-44.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the *Temps* and the *Matin* of 29th October, 1925.

On 5th June Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd<sup>1</sup> :—

The British Minister has received instructions to recommend Jonnart, who arrives this afternoon, to try to persuade Sarrail to give up his march against Thessaly, and as regards the King to confine his action to removing him from Greece until the end of hostilities, first proclaiming one of the princes Viceroy.

On 7th June Teretchenko, the Russian Foreign Minister, telegraphed to Paris and London<sup>1</sup> :—

I have sent to-day a Note to the British and French Ambassadors asking their Governments to abstain for military reasons from the execution of their plan of changing the existing regime in Greece. I mentioned, among other arguments, our difficult position when the Paris and London Governments decided to carry out at once decisions of which we are still without detailed information, decisions which have not received the approval of Russia, one of the Protecting Powers. This fact, in our view, violates the principles of solidarity which, in the common interest, Russia, France, and Britain should observe.

On the same date Demidov telegraphed to Petrograd a report of his first interview with M. Jonnart<sup>1</sup> :—

I expressed to him at length my point of view, on the basis of your telegram, without concealing from him either the mistakes made on both sides or, especially, the work of fanatical French agents who have intentionally falsified facts, or the disastrous confusion of diplomatic and military authority, or, finally, the dangers of civil war and anarchy which might arise from the deposition of so popular a king. . . Jonnart declared to me that he had not yet received formal instructions to demand the dethronement of the King, but that as soon as he received them he would be obliged to make this demand to the Prime Minister. . . Jonnart hopes to come into touch with Zaimis, although he recognizes that the absence of credentials puts him in a delicate situation in regard to the Greek Government.

On the announcement of the action proposed by M. Jonnart Lord Robert Cecil telegraphed to Mr. Graham, at the British Embassy in Paris :—

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

LONDON, 8th June, 1917

Very urgent

. . . His Majesty's Government must, if the above-mentioned report be true, protest most strongly against any such action, which is likely seriously to endanger the Allied colonies and Legations at Athens, about which it has not been consulted, and which constitutes a definite departure from the decision arrived at by the London Conference . . .

You should also point out to M. Ribot that we have been most urgently requested by the Russian Government not to allow military needs to be sacrificed to political action in Greece. And you should add that for different reasons the Italians and the Serbians have similar objections to the King being forcibly deposed. The decisions of the London Conference were purposely worded with a view of solving the Greek question peacefully . . .

You should do your utmost to induce M. Ribot to adopt the solution which I proposed in my telegram to Sir Francis Elliot that it would be quite enough for Allied purposes if the King could be induced to withdraw from Greece until the end of the war, leaving one of his sons as regent

This solution would meet the objections of both Russian, Italian, and Serbian Governments.<sup>1</sup>

In a second Note, sent on the following day, 9th June, Lord Robert Cecil telegraphed again to the British Embassy in Paris to the effect that if the British Government let itself be drawn into fresh military complications in Greece, it would be impossible to under-estimate the serious character of the results that might ensue.<sup>2</sup>

Accompanied by General Regnault, commanding the troops operating against Athens, M. Jonnart returned from Salonica to Salamis on 9th June, and took up quarters on board the *Justice*. He met M. Zaimis in the Piræus on the evening of the 10th. As it was important to gain M. Zaimis' confidence in view of the period of transition which must be passed through, M. Jonnart spoke to him only of the control of the harvest in Thessaly and the occupation of the Isthmus of Corinth. Saying that he was still awaiting instructions, he made an appointment with M. Zaimis for the morrow.

<sup>1</sup> The text of this telegram has been obtained from the archives of the French Foreign Office

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

As arranged, M. Zaimis returned to see the "High Commissioner" at 9 a.m. on the 11th. With little preliminary talk M. Jonnart handed him, in the name of the "three Protecting Powers", an ultimatum in which, after accusing King Constantine of having "manifestly violated the Constitution" of which the three Powers "were the guarantors" he said :—

"In order, therefore, to re-establish truth to the Constitution, my mission is to demand the abdication of H.M. the King, who will himself, in agreement with the Protecting Powers, nominate a successor from among his heirs."

In an *aide-mémoire* M. Jonnart added that the Crown Prince was excluded from the succession as "not presenting the guarantees which France, Great Britain, and Russia were bound to demand from the constitutional sovereign of the Hellenes". And he indicated as successor Prince Alexander, the King's second son, who was only just out of his minority, a young man without legal or political training, and thus well suited to M. Venizelos' purposes.

Thus the re-establishment of "truth to the Constitution" by the "Protecting Powers" began with the violation of Article 45 of the Greek Constitution, which stipulates that the succession to the throne shall be by primogeniture.

It is of interest to mention two telegrams, from the French Ambassadors in Petrograd and London, which were sent on the day on which M. Jonnart delivered his ultimatum in the names of the "three Protecting Powers". M. Albert Thomas, the Ambassador in Petrograd, telegraphed to Paris complaining of entire ignorance of M. Jonnart's mission.

Britain would prefer that action should be confined to peaceful operations in Thessaly and the temporary departure of the King, without abdication Teretchenko agrees, and Russia and Britain are acting together... Russian opinion is very nervous

On the same day M. Paul Cambon, the Ambassador in London, on being informed by the British Admiralty of the ultimatum which M. Jonnart was about to deliver, telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay :—

If the ultimatum is delivered, it seems to me to be difficult to explain so inexplicable an act, and one calculated to arouse suspicion of our good faith I should be obliged if you would urgently send me instructions

Disturbed by this telegram, M. Ribot replied at once (telegram dated 11th June) :—

I hope that Lord Robert Cecil will understand that a disavowal of Jonnart would be of the utmost danger to our prestige and to the security of our nationals

The High Commissioner allowed twenty-four hours for the acceptance of his ultimatum, failing which he threatened to have Athens bombarded and the whole of Greece occupied, which would involve the fall of the dynasty and the proclamation of a republic. Finally, M. Jonnart stated that the Powers intended to dissolve the Salonica Government, but that they had no desire at all to bring M. Venizelos back to Athens ; he could only return to power after fresh elections. Ultimately M. Jonnart terrorized the feeble M. Zaimis by declaring to him in a sharp tone that “ if the people at Attica attempt to resist us, we shall no longer allow ourselves to be restrained by compassion. I come from the invaded territories, I have seen Arras, where not one stone rests on another. If Athens has become German, we shall treat her as the Germans have treated Arras ”.

Such language in the mouth of a Frenchman was revolting.

On 10th June M. Jonnart telegraphed to M. Ribot that he had just learnt from Sir Francis Elliot of the British Note of the 8th objecting to his action as contrary to the London resolutions. M. Ribot had not communicated this Note to M. Jonnart, and the High Commissioner declared that he proposed to take no notice of it ! On this occasion M. Zaimis showed himself lamentably unequal to the situation ; in the presence of so monstrous a demand it did not occur to him to require M. Jonnart to prove his quality of “ High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers ” by producing the letters accrediting him in that capacity. Had M. Zaimis had the presence of mind to make this demand, M. Jonnart would have been confounded and his whole action compromised at the outset.

M. Zaimis was received at once by the King, who, exhausted by moral and physical suffering and tired of his long and sterile struggle against a concerted imposture, declared at once his readiness to leave Greece for a time.

Count Bosdari, a shrewd and experienced diplomat whose opinion is worth considering, told the author that when he first met M. Jöpnart he was struck by the High Commissioner's entire ignorance of Greek affairs, which betrayed him into the wildest misjudgments.

A Crown Council, composed of all the former Prime Ministers and the party leaders in the Chamber, was at once convoked at the Palace. It sat for more than two hours. The King, after asking the view of each member present, announced the decision which he had already taken to leave Greece with the Crown Prince in order to spare his country worse calamities. Yet more than one of those present had counselled resistance. On M. Skouloudis' advice it was decided that the King should refuse to sign an abdication ; the Crown Prince should take similar action.

King Constantine's submission is the most convincing proof of the baselessness of the odious charges brought against his character, and also of the charge of arming in secret against the Entente.

All left the Council Chamber in tears ; Prince Alexander was sobbing violently.

This drama took place on the anniversary of the day on which the last Emperor of Byzantium, Constantine Palæologus, fell on the ramparts of Constantinople. The Greek people regarded this as more than a coincidence—as an evil omen for the country's future !

As soon as the news of the King's decision spread in the city, the population rushed in crowds towards the Royal Palace. The tocsin was sounded. Alarmed groups gathered in the streets. There were cries of "The King is being carried off ! Vengeance !" There was a moment of panic. The shops hurriedly put up their shutters. Women fled weeping. It was said that the King was dead ; the crowd passed slowly by the Palace gates, with their blue uniformed guards, and looked steadily at the façade of the Palace, in which every window was lit up. It was indeed an affecting pilgrimage. In its exasperation this crowd decided to

resort to force to prevent the King from leaving. Athens was plunged into deep mourning ; the bells of all the churches tolled a funeral knell.

The night was dark. The bells continued incessantly, accompanied by cries from the crowd of "He shall not go!" The Acropolis, outlined in black against the deep blue of the nocturnal sky, gave the impression of a catafalque. Deep or shrill, the peals of the bells mingled together, some wailing, some sobbing. The more the night advanced, the more the atmosphere grew charged with the popular anger. The crowd now blocked all access to the Palace. Every face was marked with grief ; nothing was to be heard but groans interrupted by the one cry, "He shall not go!"

Ultimately the crowd invaded the Palace. The officials of the guilds filed in tears past the "martyr King" and begged him to reconsider his decision. Constantine's only reply was to counsel discipline ; impassive himself, he asked his visitors to restrain their grief in the interest of Greece. He gave the same reply to officers who came to offer their services to defend his person.

Towards 4 a.m. a motor car came up to the Palace and the Royal Family appeared at the entrance. The guards and the crowd threw themselves to the earth in front of the car to prevent it from leaving. The King and his family had to go back into the Palace. Two more attempts failed. The mournful light of dawn found the crowd still compactly pressed in front of the Palace keeping its watch. At this moment of anguish there were many who reproached the King for having been too weak in dealing with the French and having accepted their unspeakable ultimatums and Notes at a time when he had the Eastern army at his mercy.

On the morning of the 12th the King issued this proclamation to the people :—

Bowing to necessity, and accomplishing a duty towards Greece, concerned at all times only for her interests, I am departing from my loved country, with the Crown Prince, leaving my son Alexander on the throne . .

In order that my sacrifice for the country may not be in vain, I appeal to you all, if you love God and your country and myself, to submit without any disturbance. The slightest error of judgment,

even if it proceeds from an elevated sentiment, may lead to-day to great evils.

At this moment the greatest consolation for the Queen and myself lies in the affection and devotion which you always evince towards me, in happy and unhappy days alike

May God protect Greece !

CONSTANTINE R.

These words had all the weight of a last will and testament, all the melancholy of a farewell.

The popular excitement, however, continued ; the King was still shut into his palace by a considerable crowd. M. Jonnart, alarmed, had troops landed at the Piræus on the pretext that they were tired by their long stay on board. Then, this point secured, he unmasked his game, informing M. Zaimis that if the Greek police were unable to disperse the crowd which prevented the King's departure he would send French troops with machine guns ! In the meantime, however, a fresh attempt to leave had succeeded, thanks to a ruse, and the Royal Family quitted the Palace while all Greece, injured to the quick, uttered curses against the Powers that were violating the homes of the Greek people and against the "diabolical traitor" Venizelos. Constantine and his family spent the next day at Tatoi. On the following morning they embarked from the small coast resort of Oropos for Italy, amid a crowd of peasants who had hurried from all around to salute them. These peasants, overwhelmed with grief, knelt sobbing at the moment when the King embarked, and cried with emotion, " You will come back ! "

The intuition of the mass of the people always obeys the mysticism of a higher ethic. This people manifested its great affection for its prince not because he was its King but because it felt deep in its soul the revolting injustice that was being done ; it realized that Constantine was going under before organized lying and brutal force ! When the small yacht which was taking the King from the peaceful beach of Oropos heaved anchor and steamed away, leaving a brilliant wake in the deep blue water, one of the most abominable crimes against the conscience of the world had its consummation.

M. Jonnart had thus succeeded beyond expectation. On 12th June M. Ribot ended his telegram of congratulation to him with these following not very inspiring words :—

It is a fortunate conclusion which will make an end of the British protests. You have understood from my telegrams that I should have covered you whatever had happened, but it was impossible for me to let the British Cabinet suppose that from the moment of your departure from Paris you had agreed with us that the engagements entered into in London should not be kept. After taking stock of the situation you decided to take it upon yourself to modify your instructions. Success has justified you, and the British Government owes you acknowledgments which it will not fail, I hope, to add to ours.

This amazing document will be judged severely by history. At the news of the deposition of King Constantine the Press, especially that of Paris, broke out in unmeasured paeans of satisfaction. It was filled with high-sounding phrases and arrogant gestures. The "conquerors" in a battle without glory showed themselves ungenerous in the hour of victory. Their Press screamed that at last the "sly" and "felonious" monarch had been dispossessed—the monarch who had dared "to alienate himself from Venizelos by acts of pure absolutism", who had "done violence to the immense majority of his people", who had "acted as an enemy towards our army in Salonica", had infringed "the contractual rights of the Protecting Powers", organized in connivance with the Germans "the invasion of Macedonia", had "murdered our sailors", and so on.

To crown this ignominious imposture, the Press gave prominence to the telegram of thanks which Venizelos sent on 15th June to M. Ribot—thanking him in the name "of Hellenism, of civilization, and of liberty!"

On the 14th M. Ribot telegraphed to M. Jonnart that "if the state of opinion in Greece was favourable to Venizelos, he might proceed to elections; otherwise he should recall the Venizelist Chamber which was dissolved by the King two years before"!

Since that fatal 11th June, 1917, Greece has ceased to be a free State. Foreign Powers, in connivance with a small

indigenous group, part of whom were in their pay, have gradually deprived her of all the attributes of her sovereignty. The repercussions of that act of violence against the internal life of Greece are still making themselves felt long after the war.

What infamous epithets were heaped on this sovereign who was determined not lightly to throw his country into the carnage ! A shameless Press took delight for years in this abominable game. Yet it was never able to bring a single piece of evidence to support its charges. Words only, always mere words. Thanks to their world propaganda the Entente Powers held the mastery over men's minds, and they abused it.

The Belgians, in their infinite distress, had the consolation of sympathy and of the general execration of their invader. For the Greeks the world had no sympathy, only insults and laughter.

### III

On 15th June M. Jonnart celebrated his triumph by a new proclamation :—

To-day the blockade is lifted. All reprisals against the Greeks, to whatever party they may belong, will be ruthlessly suppressed. No attempt to disturb the public order will be tolerated. The property and liberty of every citizen will be safeguarded. A new era of peace and work is about to open before you. Know that the Protecting Powers, respecting the national sovereignty, have no intention of imposing a general mobilization on the Greek people. Long live Greece, united, great, and free !

In the name of France, Great Britain, and Russia, the High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers.

JONNART.

Before the ink had dried on this proclamation M. Jonnart was belying it by drawing up two lists of Greeks against whom reprisals were to be carried out. The first contained the names of thirty victims ; among others M. Gounaris, General Dousmanis, and Colonel Metaxas were to be deported to Corsica. The second list contained about 130 victims ; among them MM. Skouloudis and Lambros, several former

Ministers, lawyers, publicists and officers were to be placed under surveillance. The King's brothers were to be exiled, and a large number of plain citizens whom M. de Roquetaillade's intelligence service had reported to have taken part in the defence of Athens on 1st December were to be brought to justice!

M. Jonnart, however, was careful to safeguard certain appearances ; he had no desire to appear to be mixing in the "internal" affairs of the violated country, and he invited M. Zaimis to proceed with the "necessary purge". M. Zaimis was no better able to resist than before, although this order implied a new and crying infringement of Article 4 of the "re-established" Constitution, which authorizes neither banishment nor exile.

There are, however, some documents of the highest importance which have recently thrown a strange light on M. Jonnart's action at this moment. The first, dated 15th June, is a telegram from the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Russian Embassy in Paris<sup>1</sup> :—

I learn with surprise from our Minister in Athens that the French High Commissioner, on arriving in Greece, issued an ultimatum demanding in the name of the three Protecting Powers the abdication of the King of Greece and the designation of his successor.

The French Minister of Foreign Affairs cannot be unaware that with our inadequate knowledge of the details of the recent Anglo-French agreement on Greek affairs we have not only not given our consent to the carrying out of the plan of changing the régime in Greece, but we have more than once objected to any such action as inopportune for political reasons and for reasons of a general nature.

From Lord Robert Cecil's statements to the House of Commons, it is also clear that the British Government does not consider Jonnart as having acted in the name of Great Britain.

Jonnart's action having thus taken place *without our assent*, we consider it *as unauthorized*, and we request you to bring this fact to the notice of the French Government

TERETCHENKO.

No explanation could whittle away the force and scope of this document. M. Jonnart's action was a cruel negation

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922.

of all political morality in regard not only to Greece but to France's own allies.

The following document is also of great historic importance. On 17th June the Greek Deputy Rentis, Venizelos' liaison agent with M. Jonnart, sent the following telegram to M. N. Politis, the " Foreign Minister of the State of Salonica ":

Personal Confidential

ISLET OF SAINT GEORGE,

4th/17th June, 1917.

Monsieur le Ministre,

I came on board the *Justice* here in the Piraeus yesterday to ask whether M. Jonnart had any communication to make to us. M. Jonnart received me himself

. . . To my question whether after the departure of Constantine M. Jonnart would proceed to the peaceful occupation of Athens—as he had declared on several occasions—he replied in the negative, alleging that he had no mandate and that it was impossible to keep the army here so long. I pointed out to M. Jonnart at once that without the presence of the Allied armies in Athens the installation of M. Venizelos in this city would become difficult.

This last phrase makes the plain admission that M. Venizelos had no confidence in his popularity, since even after the departure of Constantine he needed the support of foreign bayonets before he could venture to enter Athens !

M. Jonnart pointed out to me that we must not under-estimate the scale of the work which he has just accomplished in dethroning the King of a monarchical country, a King powerful in the country, *whom his people loved, a fact which M. Jonnart admits that he did not know before his arrival* If this had been known in Britain, he said to me, the decision to dethrone the King could never have been taken

M. Jonnart added that at the moment when he was about to deliver his ultimatum to M. Zaimis he received telegraphic information from the British and Russian Governments, and even from the Rome Cabinet, informing him that these three Governments had just asked France to reconsider the decision to dethrone Constantine. Nevertheless, he said, he had not hesitated to act *without asking or waiting for instructions* from his own Government. In consequence of this Britain demanded his recall, Italy protested, and M. Ribot had just

telegraphed to him that he had completely upset the decisions of the Powers and that only success had saved him.

As to the Chamber, M. Jonnart doubts whether M. Zaimis will consent to convoke that of 31st May/13th June to take the oath to the King, for, he added, "*in spite of all that has been said to us, the King has the right of dissolution.*"

K. RENTIS.

On 17th June M. Jonnart also telegraphed to M. de Billy at Salonica :—

The King leaves strong sympathies here, and unless there is to be a series of resorts to force, which might not be appreciated even by the Allied Governments, M. Venizelos cannot dream of any immediate return to Athens

On the 18th M. Jonnart telegraphed again to M. de Billy at Salonica :—

M. Venizelos is not unaware that we are pursuing no other aim than that of preparing for his return to Athens, and that I shall not consider my mission as accomplished until the day when he has resumed the direction of affairs.

On the same date Demidov telegraphed :—

Jonnart, who proposes to invite Venizelos to come to the Piraeus, has been complaining bitterly to me of the intransigence and impatience of the latter. He has also shown me the list of persons whose deportation he has demanded of M. Zaimis, adding that in the event of any attempt at evading the penalty these persons would be declared *outlawed and their property confiscated*.

It should be borne in mind that it was at the pressing instance of M. Venizelos that M. Jonnart had drawn up his list of reprisals. (See among others the telegram of 15th June from Ribot to Jonnart.)

Following a Russian Note of the 19th to Ribot, objecting to the title of which M. Jonnart was making use, M. Jules Cambon telegraphed to M. Jonnart to omit from his signature in future the words "of the Protecting Powers" which followed "High Commissioner".

M. Jonnart, emboldened, no doubt, by his unhesitating for success, decided to crown the work of enslavement which he had undertaken in Greece and to instal Venizelos in Athens by main force. Venizelos, however, remained hesitant;

he knew in the depth of his soul the real truth asto his popularity : he wanted more than a " purging " and a " transition " before venturing to face the people of the capital. And then, touching scruple, he would like to have avoided the appearance of being imposed on the people by foreigners, he would have been glad not to confirm the sobriquet of " arch-Senegalese " which the Greek people were applying to him.

But General Sarrail was quite untroubled by these considerations : he was determined to get Venizelos quickly away from Salonica, for his relations with him were beginning to be unpleasant. He therefore had M. Venizelos embarked, and the Cretan arrived at the Piræus on 21st June on board a French warship. On his arrival at the Piræus he protested in faltering accents that he had no desire for power, and recommended the formation of a Coalition Ministry.

But M. Jonnart had already resolved, in agreement with M. Ribot, that M. Venizelos should at once assume power. He decided that the Chamber of 13th June, 1915, should be recalled to life (it had had a Venizelist majority), on the pretext that its dissolution two years before had been illegal ! This was not only a revolting negation of constitutional law but a grave offence against political morality. M. Jonnart, who had himself recognized on 17th June, in his conversation with Rentis, the legality of the dissolution of that Chamber, formally demanded from Zaimis on the 24th that it should be resuscitated !

Faced with this monstrous demand, which followed closely on the demand for the suspension of the irremovability of the Judges, which the High Commissioner had also made at the instigation of M. Venizelos, M. Zaimis at last made the tardy decision to tender his resignation. The " High Commissioner " accepted it, but hastened to wrest from King Alexander a declaration that he was prepared to place M. Venizelos in power.

The moment this news spread it aroused great resentment in Athens against France. This coincided with the return of the yacht *Sphakteria*, on which the King had sailed ; the crew of the yacht ran about the streets and started a demonstration with cries of " Long live Constantine ! " General

Regnault saw in this demonstration a "menace" and at once put into operation the important military measures which he had elaborated for the "conquest" of the neutral and completely disarmed Athens. On the morning of 25th June a whole French division, with artillery, occupied all the heights dominating the city; it was to remain there as long as M. Venizelos desired and even longer.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time General Regnault issued a proclamation that any person found with arms upon him or attempting a hostile demonstration against the Allies (a euphemism for Venizelos) would be shot. It is amazing to think that it was in the name of France that the General used this language!

It was in such circumstances that M. Venizelos constituted his Ministry, on 26th June, on board a French warship. The French authorities at once organized the staging of his landing and entry into Athens. It only remained to fix the hour of this miserable ceremony, but M. Venizelos suddenly began to hesitate; he almost withdrew, to the astonishment and irritation of General Regnault.

Why did he hesitate? Was it remorse that entered for the first time into the soul of the great conspirator?

General Regnault went in search of M. Venizelos<sup>2</sup>:

"Well, M. le President, here you are in power. Your job is to take over responsibility. I have force at my command, and my job is to secure your installation in Athens."

My words put decision into him, he thanked me effusively, grasping my hands, and told me that after all it was certain that it would always be said that he only entered Athens with the support of the Allies.

On 27th June the French troops which surrounded Athens entered the city with machine guns as though entering a conquered country; they hermetically sealed entire streets, roughly preventing townspeople caught in the street even from

<sup>1</sup> R. Recouly, *M. Jonnart en Grèce*, Paris, 1918, Plon, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> General Regnault, *La Conquête d'Athènes*, p. 101. L. Fournier, Paris, 1920. This work, as its title suggests, is of doubtful taste; its author does his best to glorify the inglorious occupation of the neutral capital and the moral depredation for which he was responsible.

returning to their homes. The French machine guns pointed their murderous mouths not only at the squares of Athens but from the height of the venerable rock of the Acropolis, ready to sow death among any who might venture to disown the traitor to Hellas. Venizelos, pale, haggard eyed, disturbed in his soul, arrived at length at the palace to take the oath. On the way he was hidden deep in a motor car travelling at top speed and escorted by French officers between two rows of French soldiers ! Never in the thousands of years in the history of Hellas has a more ignominious page been recorded ! And the same ferocious French precautions continued until Venizelos was able himself to organize his security.

On the afternoon of the same day M. Venizelos, now champion in a tourney bereft of chivalry, and completely freed from the scruples that had momentarily disturbed his conscience, pronounced a public speech in which he took up again his furious campaign of hatred.

When M. Jonnart left Athens he had every reason to congratulate himself on the complete success of his mission : the most flagrant imposture of modern times had just been ratified by a crime !

#### IV

M. Jonnart left Athens almost on the spur of the moment on the pretext of settling questions of food supply and of the loan to be granted to Greece. In reality he was recalled by the French Government ; he had aroused the concern of certain Allies who feared that Greece might become a sort of French protectorate. The British Minister, according to a telegram from Demidov to Petrograd on 21st June, had been instructed to visit the High Commissioner daily and carefully to watch his movements.<sup>1</sup>

Once M. Jonnart had gone, the passions of M. Venizelos, still unassuaged, had free play.

M. Clausse, M. Jonnart's deputy in Athens, wrote to the Quai d'Orsay on 13th July that M. Venizelos, in order to

<sup>1</sup> Russian White Book, 1922

force King Alexander to abdicate, had drawn up a telegram in terms insulting to Constantine, to be addressed by King Alexander to King Peter of Serbia. Alexander had refused to sign it. M. Clausse added details of the dispute between M. Venizelos and the King which had followed the incident. On 30th July M. Jonnart telegraphed from Paris to M. Clausse instructing him to protest to M. Venizelos in regard to his objectionable proceedings, and not to mince matters.

Finally, the secret archives of the Quai d'Orsay contain the following confidential letter sent by M. Jonnart to M. Ribot on 22nd July, 1917, in which M. Jonnart admits, without beating about the bush, the immorality of France's action in Greece :

When, in order to draw up my report on Entente policy in Greece, I read through the formidable dossier at the Ministry of the Navy, I found that the telegrams from the naval attaché were full of inexactitudes and almost always tendentious, and had contributed in no small measure to mislead the Government and the Chambers in regard to Greek affairs. I am justified in stating that matters might have turned out very differently if M. Guillemin had had the necessary authority or will to call to book the military and naval officers who pullulated in Athens, all busying themselves with politics. The result of it all was that when I reached Athens I found everyone giving orders and no one responsible. The various controls contributed greatly to the creation of the difficulties with which the Government has had to contend for a year past. They had compromised our prestige in Greece, and the British, Italian, and Russian Ministers repeated many times to their Governments that French opinion had been misled by the continual dispatch of tendentious telegrams from their agents, who had completely escaped from the control of the French Minister.

This has been a far from glorious page in the history of France. I hasten to end it . . .

JONNART

At the end of July M. Venizelos, meeting with grave difficulties in the government of his country, whose people were opposed to him virtually to a man, urged M. Ribot to send M. Jonnart back to Athens to bring him the support of foreign force. But M. Jonnart refused. He wrote as follows on 30th July to the Secretary General at the Quai d'Orsay :—

I returned as I was not qualified to represent the Protecting Powers either to the Greek Government or to the Allied Ministers in Greece, having no credentials.

I understand that Britain does not desire to be represented in Greece by Clausse. On the other hand, I must point out that I have received from London and Petrograd nothing but telegrams which formally disavowed me.

This episode ends one of the most scandalous and gloomy pages of contemporary history!

## SUMMARY OF EVENTS FROM 1917 TO 1923

We have now told the history of the “*Affaire Grecque*” from its origin to its climax in June, 1917. This is the essential period of this dramatic episode of the Great War. Later events in the East were only its inevitable sequel.

From the documents and facts given in these pages it will have been seen that the way this affair was presented to the public at the time was the most hideous imposture of the war, the greatest lie of modern times. What energy was wasted by great nations to replace common sense by incoherence and to impose on world opinion a collection of legends which had not even the justification of serving the interests of the Entente !

The moral and the essential meaning of this strange political tragedy are further revealed by the aftermath of the dethronement of Constantine. The train of events which resulted from it ends from the point of view of European history only with the signature of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

The first act of M. Venizelos, for whose profit the Greek nation had been tortured for more than two years, was to suspend the Constitution “in the name of the Greek people” ! By what right did he speak in the name of his Greek fellow-citizens ?

Having no national mandate to show, since his masters were not the Greek voters, he governed for three years as the agent of the foreigners who had installed him in Athens. Prisoner of the methods by which he had gained power, his action could only be destructive of all national life. He divided his fellow-citizens into two classes, *patriots* (his partisans) and *traitors* (his political opponents). Soon, every anti-Venizelist was proclaimed *ipso facto* guilty of

treason and mercilessly persecuted. And as a tyrant never lacks instruments of tyranny, Venizelos always found judges to condemn as many people as he saw fit to suspect.

But despite his omnipotence, despite the implacable purging of the bench, the army, the Civil Services, even the Church, despite even the presence of 500,000 foreign bayonets to maintain him in power, for three months he did not venture to attempt a mobilization. When he began it he proceeded with unparalleled slowness, class by class, district by district, so as to isolate and intimidate the conscript by having sufficient gendarmes at each place to overpower recalcitrants. In spite of all precautions there were mutinies of reservists, who declared that the Government which called them up was not a legal one. On each occasion M. Venizelos acted with terrible severity. He had hundreds of young men summarily executed, and nipped in the bud any popular protest by savage abuse of his power under the state of siege. During this time the Paris and London press declared that Greece was living in happiness and prosperity!

After the capitulation of the Central Powers and the armistice of 1918 Venizelos believed that he had triumphed, and redoubled his persecution of political opponents. A cloud of spies, *agents provocateurs* and informers descended on the country. The prisons were full of political suspects, the army and the chief towns were once more "purged", and some barren islands transformed into deportation camps. Here thousands of "suspects" were interned. The penal code was enriched by clauses it had never known, making offences of a tune and a photograph.<sup>1</sup> In no belligerent country did persecution mania so victimize free citizens as in Greece.

Soon, however, Venizelos had to recognize that the victory of the Entente, on which he had counted to cover and justify his treason, did not necessarily mean the triumph of Hellenism. To win Entente support against his King he had entered the war "unconditionally", trusting solely to "the loyalty" of the Protecting Powers. But the Powers were realists before all else—it is always so in history—and after the victory

<sup>1</sup> Songs in honour of Constantine's Balkan victories and portraits of the King.

they forgot their little allies and forgot their great formulæ concerning the liberation of peoples.

Terrified by this rude awakening to reality, Venizelos saw no way of recovering himself except by going to war again. The Allies had undertaken a mad expedition to the Ukraine against Bolshevik Russia, and were short of men. Venizelos offered them a Greek army corps. This time he asked as compensation Eastern Thrace, a province which might fairly have been expected to go to Greece after the Allied victory. The rest is well known. The Allied expedition was thrown into the sea, the two Greek divisions were decimated, and as reprisal the Greeks in Russia, more than 100,000 in number, who so far had been spared by the Bolsheviks, were now shamefully pillaged and massacred.

Venizelos now invented a new crime, "Lack of goodwill towards the regime". The least criticism of the Government's action came under this new addition to the penal code. Finally, to complete the Terror, the Cretan politician's regime resumed the medieval practice of putting a price on the heads of several of its opponents who had fled.

In May, 1919, came the event which caused one of the greatest disasters Greek history has ever known. At the time when the Council of Four quarrelled and the Italians left Paris, Venizelos presented himself before the Three and, with tears in his eyes and his voice broken with sobs, handed them a Turkish proclamation couched in ferocious terms calling on the faithful to massacre all enemies of the Prophet in Smyrna. Quivering with emotion, Venizelos declared the Council of Three responsible before history if they let this horror come to pass. The Three were alarmed, but as they had no troops at their disposal—as the Cretan knew—they confided to Greek troops the task of saving Smyrna. They stipulated, however, that the Greek occupation should be temporary, restricted, and pacific.

On landing, however, the Greeks fired on the crowd, and there were so many Turkish victims that the Council of Three had to send a Commission of Inquiry to Smyrna. The Commission presented a circumstantial confidential report—a volume of 300 printed pages, which the privileged may consult in the Chancelleries—from which it appears, in

addition to other grave charges against Venizelos, that the Turkish proclamation which he had used to secure the expedition to Smyrna was forged by himself !<sup>1</sup>

In view of the Commission's report, M. Clemenceau strongly urged Venizelos to leave Smyrna. The danger from Kemal Pasha was beginning to reveal itself, and the financial interests of France were not served by the presence of the Greeks in that city. To spare Greek feelings M. Clemenceau, following the suggestion of the Commission of Inquiry, proposed an Allied occupation of Smyrna so that all the Allies could evacuate the town together. If that proposal had been accepted by Venizelos, what disasters he would have spared his nation ! But he refused. He feared injury to his position in the civil war that he was carrying on in Athens. Sacrificing country to party, he intrigued in masterly fashion to defeat the proposal. Greece was thus sent out on an overseas war far beyond her strength.

M. Raymond Poincaré wrote in a letter to the author, dated 30th June, 1926 :—

Mr. Lloyd George, in particular, and M. Venizelos, made up their minds to throw Greece into an adventure which had no other object than to serve the interests of British Imperialism in Asia Minor, and which was doomed from the outset to certain failure. After Marshal Foch had examined the position, I warned Greece of the dangers of the expedition. M. Venizelos may have thought me very Turcophile at the time, but unhappily it was he who was letting himself be manœuvred by Mr. Lloyd George.

The occupation of Smyrna caused in Greece more concern than satisfaction. The people, tired of war already, saw in it a new and bloody Venizelist adventure. There were no signs of popular enthusiasm, and to produce them the police had to order the citizens to display flags.

<sup>1</sup> *Conférence de la Paix, 1919-20 Recueil des Actes de la Conférence Partie IV: Commissions de la Conférence (Procès-Verbaux. Rapports et Documents). C. Questions territoriales—V Commission chargée d'étudier les questions territoriales intéressant la Grèce*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1923, quarto. In the appendix of nearly 300 pages are the minutes, reports, and documents of the inter-allied Commission of Inquiry into the Greek occupation of Smyrna and the adjacent territories. This Commission sat from 12th February to 21st March, 1919, on territorial questions concerning Greece. It considered the Smyrna affair from 17th to 19th November, 1919.

In November the French press was unanimous in wanting to get the Greeks out of Smyrna ; "the new conditions," the papers said, "call for new solutions." On 18th November the Supreme Council wrote to Venizelos that it could only repeat that the occupation of Smyrna must be temporary.

In January, 1920, the rumour got about that Britain was going to make an end of the Turkish State. The French press unanimously protested against this as in conflict with French interests, and demanded that Turkey must be enabled to live by giving her Adrianople and Anatolia. Venizelos, disturbed at this change of attitude, eased his troubled conscience by redoubling the persecution of his fellow citizens.

At this time the Kemalist forces were reckoned at 50,000 men, and certain far-seeing Frenchmen again advised Venizelos to withdraw from Smyrna. The Millerand Cabinet had just been formed, and had officially modified France's Turkish policy<sup>1</sup> in Turkey's favour.

On 16th February, 1920, Venizelos telegraphed from London to Athens a declaration made to him by Mr. Lloyd George on the subject of the Greek occupation of Smyrna. The British Prime Minister had "to struggle not only against the French Premier, who declared that Greece ought to be given only an economic sphere of influence, but also against the British Foreign Secretary".<sup>2</sup>

On 19th March there came another message from London : the British War Minister, on behalf of Mr. Lloyd George, had asked Venizelos whether in the event of Turkey refusing to accept the peace terms, Greece would see to the military imposition of these terms on her in Thrace and Asia Minor, for Britain's "many commitments" did not allow her to send troops to help Greece. Venizelos added :—

The Minister gave us to understand that we must not count on the aid of France and Italy. I replied that as far as the districts assigned to us were concerned we would undertake to impose the peace terms.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Officiel*, 26th August, 1924, p 3117.

<sup>2</sup> Secret Greek diplomatic documents published by the *Martin*, 2nd December, 1922

On the 26th Venizelos telegraphed to Athens :—

The French Government's action in regard to Greece becomes more and more disturbing. As a result of a report from the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople, declaring that it is impossible to impose the peace terms on Turkey, the French Premier proposed a revision of the Supreme Council's resolutions. This was rejected by Britain. But we run the risk, all through these negotiations, of seeing France act against our interests, for the present Premier is entirely under the influence of financial circles<sup>1</sup>.

The man who disdained the elementary teaching of history and had so blind a confidence in the great, suffered a cruel disappointment: Constantine had been much more farsighted.

Meanwhile Kemal was undertaking small attacks against the Greeks, and in April, 1920, while the San Remo Conference was putting the finishing touches on the Peace Treaty with Turkey, the French press was energetically demanding "an independent Turkey capable of existence".

At this time the Greek prisons were filled with political prisoners and the concentration camps with deportees. A fresh postponement of elections brought down on Venizelos a charge from the Opposition of revolutionism. He replied angrily in the Chamber that "by the grace of God he possessed the privilege of seeing further into the future than other men, and that not merely straight ahead but round corners"! All his speeches in Greece after this were rancorous and provocative maledictions of a whole category of Greeks, as if his one purpose was to exacerbate civil strife. The Venizelist police raged more ferociously than ever against anyone who so much as mentioned the name of Constantine.

The "Powers guaranteeing the constitutional liberties of Greece", once so enamoured of this "privilege", so touchy regarding their "contractual rights", showed singular forbearance towards Venizelos when he entirely abolished constitutionalism. He could use violence against the Greek people, make it endure oppression and slavery, plunge it into mourning, but at no time in these three years did it

<sup>1</sup> Greek secret diplomatic documents published by the *Malin*, 2nd December, 1922.

occur to these "Liberal and liberating" Great Powers to ask their henchman in the name of elementary Christian charity at least to use his instruments of torture more humanely.

On 15th June Venizelos telegraphed from London to Athens news which he had received from Mr. Lloyd George : Italy, without compromising herself, was inciting Turkey to armed resistance against the Greeks ; French opinion would not tolerate the sending of an army against the Turks, and Mr. Lloyd George himself had to struggle against the Foreign Office and against British military circles, which had become pro-Turk. Mr. Lloyd George had therefore asked him whether Greece was in a position to enforce the peace treaty on Turkey single-handed. Venizelos added :—

I replied that Greece was strong enough and would show her readiness to make the necessary effort so long as she was collaborating with the two Western Powers, or, at least, with Britain.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lloyd George was the only one, not only of the Allied but of the British Ministers, to encourage Venizelos in this policy of adventure. Sir Henry Wilson confirms this in his Diaries. The British Premier, fearing for Iraq, hoped that the Greeks would keep the Turks fully occupied. It did not occur to him that the Greeks, fighting far from their base, might be the first to be worn down, and that a Greek debacle would bring the worst of complications. He was so convinced of the soundness of his policy that later he was as energetic in urging Gounaris along this path as he had been with Venizelos.

Under the stress of the struggle at home Venizelos lost his grip on reality, and in June he again launched an offensive in Asia Minor. At this time the Cretan's police went so far as to prohibit the wearing of certain flowers which by name or colour symbolized Constantine. His government, writes Bosdari, imposed "a regime of terror" on the whole of Greece.<sup>2</sup>

This offensive against Kemal in June was singularly fortunate. The Greek troops advanced rapidly. They were on the point of dealing the enemy a decisive blow when

<sup>1</sup> Greek secret diplomatic documents published by the *Matin*, 2nd December, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Bosdari, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

France and Italy, alarmed at their success, demanded from Venizelos, on penalty of withdrawing their mandate, the immediate suspension of military operations. The purpose of the demand was to save Kemal and so to save Turkey, for the partition of Turkey would have constituted, according to the *Temps*, "a diminution of the French estate in the East." M. Venizelos, instead of simply considering his country's interest and ridding it for ever of the Kemalist peril by sacrificing himself, if necessary, preferred to bow to the wishes of France, whose help was indispensable to him in the civil conflict in Greece.

On 10th August, 1920, there was signed the belated "scrap of paper" of Sèvres, the ambiguous text of which aimed at concealing the inter-allied disagreements concerning the terms of peace with Turkey. It was repudiated almost as soon as the ink on the signatures was dry. On the very day of its signature Italy, through her Premier, declared that signature did not mean approval. France went still further; she declared semi-officially that this Treaty would never be submitted to Parliament for ratification.

So the brilliant success gained by M. Venizelos, thanks to Mr. Lloyd George, at Sèvres was a success only on paper. To make it effective Greece would have had to remain mobilized in perpetuity. Venizelos, however, deceived as to the real value of his victory, believed that the time had come to face the electorate. He imagined that all his treacheries, all the misdeeds of his adherents, were wiped out by the document signed at Sèvres.

On the morrow of the signature of the Treaty an attempt was made to assassinate him in Paris by two young Greek officers, who hoped so to set their country free. Venizelos escaped with a slight wound, but his police carried out savage reprisals against the citizens of Athens. They assassinated the Deputy Dragoumis, one of the noblest figures of contemporary Greece, and looted the house of M. Skouloudis, destroying its priceless art treasures.

In the latter half of 1920 Greece presented a tragic spectacle of tyranny, disorder and calumny. Venizelist justice enormously increased its tale of political prisoners. On 25th October King Alexander died. Venizelos offered the crown

to Constantine's third son, Paul. Paul replied nobly that only the Greek people was entitled to elect its king. Venizelos, offended at a reply which wounded his pride, proceeded to hold elections, which he believed might bring him triumph. After the Sèvres treaty, carried away by the praises which his formidable propaganda service showered on him, he believed that the nation could not fail to bow to his person, now consecrated by a sort of divine investiture.<sup>1</sup>

A week before the elections he abolished the censorship and the state of siege, and arrogantly asked of the nation the question "Myself or Constantine?" On 1st/14th November, 1920, the nation, with a shout for liberty and peace, replied by a huge majority "Constantine". Venizelos did not wait to complete the formalities usual at a change of government. He fled secretly from the country, like a criminal who has caught sight of the police.

*Nihil violentum durabile:* No usurper lasts, neither a usurper of liberty nor a usurper of truth. Even when so many innocent people were perishing unjustly it was impossible to believe that the hour of retribution would not strike for Venizelos. Had he escaped it, this spectacle of prosperous guilt would have encouraged the simple to turn to a life of crime.

The Greek people had put an end to the unending martyrdom which the Great Powers had inflicted on it. It now brought Constantine back in triumph. He incarnated in its eyes the vindication of truth against falsehood and of justice against injustice. For weeks all Greece deliriously celebrated the restoration of the rights of men and citizens.

It must, however, be noted that this electoral debacle was a piece of good fortune for Venizelos himself, for it allowed him to bequeath his Asiatic expedition to his opponents and saddle them with the responsibility for its inevitable disaster.

At the Quai d'Orsay the defeat of Venizelos was received

<sup>1</sup> From 1917 to 1920 Venizelos's Press Bureau (at the Greek Foreign Office) spent about 70,000,000 gold francs in subsidies to newspapers and journalists abroad—a huge sum for a tiny State. The payments were accompanied by a stipulation that propaganda in favour of Greece's national claims should be combined with exaltation of the *genius* of Venizelos.

with amazement and consternation ; not that the interest of France was in the least threatened thereby, but solely because the amour propre of many public men had suffered a heavy blow. By its act the Greek people had issued a disconcerting contradiction of the propaganda whereby, especially in the name of France, neutral Greece had been misrepresented. Consequently the Premier, M. Leygues, suggested to Britain that force should be used to prevent Constantine's return. Britain refused. She was unwilling to begin again an intrigue which she had never really approved, and with her usual elasticity of policy semi-officially informed Constantine, then at Lucerne, that she would not oppose his return to the throne. Her Minister at Berne was received by the King.

Unhappily, the honour of France being directly involved, strong pressure was used in London, and Britain finally agreed to a compromise. Two Notes were sent to Greece. One, dated 2nd December, said that "the restoration of King Constantine, whose disloyal conduct during the war had caused such embarrassment and loss to the Allies, would be considered as a ratification by the Greek nation of the hostile acts of the King". The second, dated 6th December, informed the Athens Government that Allied war credits to Greece would be stopped.

The ablest of Jesuits could not have found formulæ more cleverly contrived to quieten uneasy consciences. The first of these Notes, apart from the moral baseness of its declarations, was a purely platonic threat. The second had no reality at all.<sup>1</sup>

After the short-lived Ministries of Rallis and Kalogeropoulos, who had succeeded Venizelos, Gounaris took office. At the London Conference, summoned in March, 1921, to conclude peace in the East by revising the Sèvres Treaty, new terms were proposed to Greece. They deprived her of the military occupation of Smyrna, but they were, on the whole, acceptable. If Gounaris had accepted them he would have obeyed the mandate which he received from the

<sup>1</sup> Britain had already paid over the bulk of the credits granted for Greece's war ; France, in spite of Venizelos's appeals, had from the first been quite unable, in view of her own financial position, to honour her promises

electors, who demanded peace and no oversea adventures. M. Gounaris was on the point of accepting when he received from Mr. Lloyd George, through the latter's private secretary, Mr. Philip Kerr, the advice that Greece should not take too much heed of the speeches at the Conference. If she thought she could still impose the original peace terms on the Kemalists Britain would not stand in the way.

Lloyd George was speaking to Gounaris precisely as he had spoken to Venizelos. Gounaris consulted the Assistant Chief of Staff, Colonel Sariyannis, then in London, a Venizelist officer who had participated in the campaign in Asia Minor since the beginning. Sariyannis declared in the presence of Marshal Foch, and in spite of the latter's disagreement, that the Greek army would crush the Kemalists in a fortnight, and Gounaris thereupon rejected the new terms and ordered the Greek army to advance.

Mr. Lloyd George, however, who had instigated the Greek offensive, next day joined France in declaring that as Greece had not accepted the advice of her great allies she could no longer be considered by them as an ally.

The Greek offensive against Eski-Sehir failed. The Kemalist army was far stronger than Colonel Sariyannis had declared. This check, although local, had an awkward diplomatic result : Greece could no longer speak of peace without admitting defeat. She had consequently to call up fresh classes and undertake a fresh offensive against Kemal on a large scale.

The Greek army, whose morale had been greatly improved by the arrival of Constantine in Asia Minor, won two brilliant victories at Kutahia and Eski-Sehir, and pursued the Kemalists half-way to Angora. But instead of diplomatically exploiting these victories to conclude peace—Lord Curzon had formulated a proposal for a conference on the eve of these battles—Gounaris allowed himself to be captivated by the idea of treating only after the capture of the enemy's capital. Another battle was fought, the murderous battle of Sangarios. The Greek offensive was held up at the very gates of Angora, and Gounaris was compelled to discuss peace on the morrow of a check in the field.

In October, 1921, France, alarmed at the cost in men and

money of the war in Syria, signed with the Turks the provisional Treaty of Angora. In virtue of this separate peace, which broke the solidarity of the Allies, France evacuated Cilicia and made concessions to the Turks in territory and, what was more surprising, in war material, which roused the wrath of London.

At this news, Gounaris in alarm handed over entirely to Britain the defence of Greek interests. He even conceded in principle the evacuation of Smyrna and the surrender of part of Eastern Thrace. But the meeting of the Peace Conference was delayed; the intrigues amongst the Allies had full scope.

During all this period, France and Italy had denied Greece the right of searching their ships, many of which were carrying contraband of war to Kemal. Mr. Lloyd George, who never ceased showering encouragement on the Greeks, never displayed energy enough to impose on those Powers respect for a principle of international law which they themselves had abused in Greece during the Great War. This was one of the chief causes of the Greek debacle in 1922. French diplomacy, to conceal this monstrous illegality, denied that Greece was a belligerent! A theory truly revolting, for if Greece was at war it was only because France had driven her to war by brutal pressure.

Gounaris, out of loyalty to Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Curzon, did not dream of separate negotiations with the Turks. But from the beginning of 1922 he clearly recognized the danger of the situation. On 15th February he sent a letter to Lord Curzon to inform him of the disquieting state of the Greek army and to indicate his intention of evacuating Asia Minor. Lord Curzon hastened to reply that he refused to believe that the state of the Greek army was so serious, and appealed to Greek patriotism and courage not to fail at so critical a moment. When the Greek debacle began in Asia Minor Mr. Lloyd George advised M. Gounaris not to ask for an armistice, reminding him of the mistake made by Ludendorff in 1918. Mr. Lloyd George, it is true, had been thinking of preventing the return of the Turks to Europe by Allied action; but M. Poincaré defeated this praiseworthy intention. He had conceived the

adventurous plan of involving Britain in a war with Turkey, and so with Islam, in the hope of shaking the British Empire and assuring France full liberty of action on the Rhine.

The Greek debacle in Anatolia was thus the result of the war-weariness of badly provisioned troops who had been under arms for ten years, and of the defeatist propaganda of certain Venizelists. On this latter point it is worth while to recall that in 1922 M. Gounaris had secured authority from the British Government to place in London a war loan of £15,000,000. But the Greek war profiteers, who had been enormously enriched through the indulgence of M. Venizelos' Government, were determined to stop at nothing to get their protector back into power. They intrigued in the City to make it impossible for their country's loan to be issued. They were assisted in this by French diplomacy, which was working to the same end in order to withdraw Greece from British influence. The most deplorable episode in this defeatist campaign happened in August, 1922. M. Gounaris had just formed a coalition Cabinet with the programme of the gradual withdrawal of Greek troops from Asia Minor, concentration in Thrace, and the occupation of Constantinople by a *coup de main*, with Britain's tacit assent. At this moment, however, M. Venizelos was in London. With French support he energetically brought to bear on the Foreign Office and Mr. Lloyd George all the personal influence which at that time he still possessed, in order to dissuade Britain from agreeing to the Greek plan. The realization of the plan would have brought Greece happily out of the war, and would have consolidated King Constantine's position, a result which M. Venizelos desired at all costs to prevent.

On the morrow of this defeat, a group of officers, intimates of Venizelos, of whom several had refused to fight the enemy, turned the confusion and popular excitement to their profit, and marched on Athens, under the leadership of Colonel Plastiras,<sup>1</sup> to seize power. They declared that they were acting solely in the interests of their country, but their real aim, as the

<sup>1</sup> Col Plastiras has been publicly accused in official military reports of having been one of those principally responsible for the breaking of the Greek front.

sequel showed, was to conceal the fact of their desertion of their posts, and to bring their party back to power.

They called on Constantine to abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince under the pretext that his presence on the throne stood in the way of Greece's return to "the bosom of the Entente". They declared that as a result of their action France would draw her sword in aid of the Greeks. In their ignorance or malice they were deluded by memories of the propaganda of the war years. If they were to be believed, the Great Powers were ready to subordinate their interests to their admiration for the personality of Venizelos! Accordingly they entrusted to him the conduct of Greek foreign policy.

The French Press gave Venizelos a cold welcome on his return to the stage. When, on the eve of the Lausanne Conference, he presented himself at the Quai d'Orsay to try to save Eastern Thrace, he was met with a blunt negative.

The debate on the Lausanne Treaty in the French Chamber brought the final proof that the return of Constantine to the throne had had no effect on the Turcophil policy of France, a policy adopted long before the fall of Venizelos. In the debate MM. Briand, Leygues, Franklin-Bouillon, Herriot, Milhaud, etc., related in turn the history of France's post-war policy in the near East; but none of them mentioned the names either of Constantine or Venizelos—not even indirectly—as having influenced the course of French policy. On the contrary, the Premier, M. Herriot, after recalling the fact that it was to France that Turkey owed her retention of Constantinople, finished, to the applause of the Chamber, with the very unexpected declaration that "it was to some extent France's fault that Turkey entered the war against her"!

The military-Venizelist "revolution" of 1922 did service to the country for a moment through its vigorous reorganization of the army in Thrace; but it rapidly degenerated into an agency of dissolution. It resumed Venizelos' fatal line of activity, violating the Constitution, restricting popular liberties, and reviving all the lies spread by propaganda during the world war. In this "revolution" Venizelos found a means of avenging his electoral defeat in 1920,

a chastisement from his country that had in no way inclined him to repentance.

Scarcely had the Lausanne Conference begun its work when the Venizelist military clique, in obedience to the inspiration of its chief, brought the political leaders who had been the Cretan's opponents before a military court constituted *ad hoc*, and this exceptional tribunal had them executed out of hand.<sup>1</sup>

This tragedy aroused indignation throughout the world: it was a ferocious way of calling to account statesmen who had assumed power in due form, and one which flouted the ideas of our age. The merciless execution of five ex-ministers and a commander-in-chief, ordered after a trial which had been but a mockery, and in spite of urgent advice from Britain, whom it was to the great advantage of Greece to conciliate, could only be the work of smothered consciences. The London Cabinet was so incensed at the assassination of men who had trusted to Britain's word that it broke off diplomatic relations with Greece.

The fact must, moreover, be insisted on that it was for having continued M. Venizelos' war, this time with the consent of a properly elected National Assembly, that the opponents of that politician were put to death as traitors, while he, the man who had carried through so many conspiracies solely for his own profit, who had revolted against the law, had brought invasion on his country, had traduced, starved, and finally conscripted his fellow-citizens to serve French ends, was left undisturbed.

Under pressure from Lord Curzon, but some hours after the crime had actually been committed, Venizelos telegraphed from Lausanne to Athens to stop the executions. But that did not prevent him from showing his real sentiments next day by defending the crime in an interview published in the *Matin* and reproduced in the *Corriere della Sera* and the *Stampa*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Homme Libre* of 23rd April, 1925, published the text of a secret telegram sent by Politis, the Greek Foreign Minister in 1922, to Venizelos, who was then at Lausanne, in which, before the trial was over, Politis insisted on the execution of the political opponents of Venizelism. The telegram has never been repudiated by Politis, although in April, 1925, he was Greek Minister in Paris.

<sup>2</sup> *Matin*, No 1435. *Corriere della Sera* and *Stampa*, 1st December, 1922.

Venizelos had thus secured his "vengeance". He continued to be a member of the Lausanne Conference, but henceforth without prestige, and surrounded by universal dislike. In the course of the debates Britain was very lukewarm in defence of Greek interests: France invariably took the Turkish side against the interests defended by her ex-agent Venizelos. On 26th May, 1923, the Conference suddenly came to a crisis. Venizelos offered Ismet Pasha Karagatch, a small town on the right bank of the Maritza, instead of the "reparations" demanded by Turkey, and in the event of his refusal threatened an invasion of Eastern Thrace. Poincaré answered this move by proposing to Britain and Italy that a regular naval blockade of Greece should be established if Venizelos carried out his threat.<sup>1</sup> This was Venizelos' final humiliation. He was being treated by France as France, at his own instigation, had treated his King a few years before. It was a rude lesson in political realism and a proof of the insincerity of the idealist formulæ proclaimed during the war. An important French personage to whom complaint was made of France's "ingratitude" towards Venizelos, the friend who once was so much in favour, replied: "France never entered into any engagements with Venizelos in favour of Greece. Venizelos came to fight by our side in order to get our assistance in dethroning his King. That done, our debt to him was discharged."

What makes yet graver Venizelos' responsibility for the Greek disaster in Asia Minor is the fact that he had had timely warning of the inevitable consequences of his Asiatic adventure from the most competent authorities in France and Britain. We have already mentioned the warnings given by M. Poincaré and, yet earlier, by Marshal Foch. We have also mentioned that of the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry into the Greek occupation of Smyrna in 1919. From the *Life and Diaries of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* recently published it appears that Sir Henry had

<sup>1</sup> The communiqué of the Quai d'Orsay was published in the *Matin, Temps*, etc., of 27th May. Fortunately Ismet Pasha only learned of Poincaré's proposal on the morning of the 27th; he had already accepted Venizelos's proposals on the evening of the 26th.

himself given M. Venizelos the most explicit warnings. He mentions the following conversation with M. Venizelos on 28th October, 1919<sup>1</sup> :—

I told him straight out that he had ruined his country and himself by going to Smyrna, and the poor man agreed, but said the reason was because Pans had not finished off the Turk and had made peace with him. This, of course, is only partly so. Venizelos is very bitter against the Turk, and said the whole 12 divisions were available if we would finish the Turk off. He realises that he is in a hopeless position, and is trying now to sell his 12 divisions. He begged me to tell Lloyd George that both he (Venizelos) and Greece were *done*. I said I would. The old boy is *done*.

On 19th March, 1920, Sir Henry Wilson wrote in his diary<sup>2</sup> :—

Winston and I had an hour with Venizelos this afternoon. We made it clear to him that neither in men nor in money, neither in Thrace nor in Smyrna, would we help the Greeks, as we already had taken on more than our small army could do. I told him that he was going to ruin his country, that he would be at war for years with Turkey and Bulgaria and that the drain in men and money would be far too much for Greece. He said that he did not agree with a word I said.

And on 17th June, 1920<sup>3</sup> :—

. . . I saw Venizelos, who is sketchy to a degree. He promises Lloyd George everything, and Lloyd George believes everything he is told; but when I come to pin Venizelos down, he knows nothing and can promise nothing

Finally, during the Lausanne Conference, Venizelos took a step disastrous for the future of Hellenism. It was he who conceived and proposed the plan of the compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece. Two years after, the *Temps* (5th February, 1925) expressed this judgment of his plan :—

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries*. London, 1927, Vol. 2, p. 213

<sup>2</sup> Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, op. cit., p. 230

<sup>3</sup> Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, op. cit., p. 244.

Every possible evil is arising from this abominable and disastrously mistaken plan of exchanging populations. It is contrary to all humane feeling and to human dignity, and its application has caused more suffering and cost more lives in the East than a long and cruel war.

The Lausanne Treaty was signed on 24th July, 1923. All European interests suffered, and some of the best secured results of the Allied victory in the East were wiped out.

## CONCLUSION

After rejecting the alliance offered in 1914 by Venizelos and King Constantine, who were then in agreement, the Entente abused the sovereign who had been wise enough, in March, 1915, to refuse to hurl his country into the bottomless abyss of the Dardanelles. A little later, under the Gounaris Ministry, Greece offered her co-operation on conditions whose rare foresight the future proved to the uttermost. The Entente's sole reply was to threaten Greece with amputation in favour of the Bulgars. In September, 1915, the rash folly of Venizelos thought to launch the tiny Greek army against the formidable coalition of the victorious Central Powers, then masters of the Balkans. In refusing to support his unwise Minister, King Constantine saved at once his own country and Sarrail's slender army. The Greek people unanimously approved this action of their King. During the Skouloudis Ministry, from November, 1915, to June, 1916, Greece strove desperately to practise benevolent neutrality towards the Entente—a neutrality perpetually undermined by France's intrigues and buffets, instigated by Venizelos. Lastly, under the Ministries of Zaimis, Kalogeropoulos, and even Lambros, King Constantine made fresh efforts to negotiate Greece's entry into the war on the side of the Entente. But the Entente's sole reply was still to heap insults on Greece by means of their Press.

Diplomatic history records no affair so incoherently and pitifully mismanaged. The rulers of France at that time needed the Greek alliance in order to conceal before French and world opinion their innumerable mistakes in the Balkans. Instead of taking the straight road to making an ally of Greece, they preferred to follow the long, ugly and precipitous path down which Venizelos offered to guide them.

These men, not daring openly to contest Greece's right to remain neutral, put about stories of the "tyranny" and "treachery" of Constantine, of the "patriotism" and

"liberalism" of Venizelos. A kind of general offensive, made up of false and falsified documents, was let loose like a barrage over the whole world. The actions of neutral Greece were misconstrued, her words travestied. Words never uttered were ascribed to her, and actions of which she was physically incapable.

The war was followed by an incredible conspiracy of silence. Men dare not yet write the truth, and we still see great and serious newspapers repeating the myths of past propaganda as unshakable truths. Further, the Entente Governments appear to have agreed after the war to retard the publication of that part of their archives which related to Greece. The Governments evidently feared the reproaches of their own peoples for their unjustifiable practices. But there were a number of fortunate leakages in the French archives. These disclosures came to our knowledge, and we thought it our duty to publish them in the interests of history. Our French friends will pardon us our indiscretion, of which the only motive was concern for truth and for political morality. The disclosures made through the leakages from the French archives are further confirmed in the documents made public by the Soviet Government—documents which, so far as they relate to Greece, we are the first to publish in English.

The moral repercussions of the foreign intrusion into her internal affairs were disastrous for Greece. The least praiseworthy elements, led first by Venizelos, later by those of his disciples who learned in his school to use revolution as a means of obtaining power, turned Greece into a mediaeval despotism. From 1917 to the present day—excepting only the brief period when Constantine returned to the throne—Greece has lived under a regime of pronunciamentos.

Eleutherios Venizelos, born and brought up in Crete, in the raw and bitter atmosphere of party warfare, retained throughout his life the imprint of his early environment. While still young, he exhibited in Crete a disconcerting mixture of lofty qualities and grave defects. When he first became Premier of Greece he made a brilliant impression by his intelligence; but his intelligence was frag-

mentary. He never understood the difference between good and bad.

A shrewd politician, a skilful diplomat, an excellent speaker, he had all the talents required to make a remarkable statesman. But to these lofty qualities he added a restless and subversive spirit. He was adventurous, often inconsistent, ardent, passionate. Nothing could restrain his least ambition or caprice. Conspiracy and treason were to him a game. He was an excellent actor, and could play all parts to perfection. He might have fashioned the renaissance of Hellas. Instead he consumed the resources of his intelligence in the satisfaction of his passions through civil war.

Up to the end of the Balkan Wars, Venizelos had every right to the esteem of his country. But immediately after the treaty of Bucarest a shadow fell on the radiant picture of the unity of Greece. The glory of Venizelos was, indeed, brilliant, but he had not the monopoly of it. He shared it equally with the Crown Prince Constantine, who became King in 1913, and who actually commanded the armies which defeated the Turks and the Bulgars. Venizelos could not endure to share his glory. His autocratic temperament was hurt. He wanted to be alone in command of Greece.

With the coming of the Great War, collision between the two men became inevitable. The impulsiveness of Venizelos, his ever troubled spirit, his unshakable faith in his star, thrust him into adventures and prevented him from accommodating himself to neutrality or to a waiting policy. Constantine, on the other hand, felt that the war was, after all, a game of chance in which to risk too much was to risk losing all. This difference of opinion degenerated into civil war. Venizelos, in revolting against his King, revolted against the almost unanimous will of the Greek people, of whose anxiety to avoid war Constantine was only the interpreter.

The more accommodating and complaisant M. Venizelos was beyond the frontiers of Greece, the more intransigently and intractably pro-war he was within them.

All the subsequent misfortunes of Greece were the result of the split caused by Venizelos among his fellow citizens. In order to win he did not hesitate to range his partisans—an insignificant minority—against the whole of the nation;

he did not hesitate to slander his country to foreigners and even to launch himself against it at the head of foreign bayonets. In this last act, especially, Venizelos resuscitated the most terrible of the faults of his race—that which has done most harm to Hellenism in the last two thousand years. Did he not, as we have seen, secretly conspire in 1915 with the Quai d'Orsay to deprive the Greek people of corn and then to let it in, "only by driplets"? In 1916, did he not invite France, still in secret, to refuse Greece her promised loans, by denouncing to her as iniquitous the government of his country? In 1916, did he not, again in secret, accept foreign money to spread the ferment of revolt in his country? In 1916 and 1917, did he not use his genius for intrigue to thwart British and even French attempts at reconciliation with his King?

The most surprising thing about Venizelos is his contempt for the lessons of history. No empire has ever been built up on civil war and treachery. It does not seem to have occurred to him that the fratricidal war which he let loose within Greece was incompatible with the national war which he waged abroad. He did not see that to pursue these two opposite ends was inevitably to lead his country and himself to disaster. He did not understand that the greatness of a country depends above all on the civic qualities of its statesmen.

When Venizelos fell, spite drove him still to lend his hand to the most malignant propaganda against his country. In 1921 he exclaimed furiously before the jury of the Seine<sup>1</sup> that his King was "a Boche from head to foot and from foot to head".

The work of ignorance, of passion and of error, cannot live. It is destined to the execration of history. Posterity, which will come to know in detail this episode in the Great War, will be saddened by it. It will meditate at length on this alliance of men without conscience; and will use the word "Venizelism" as a synonym for shameful treachery.

Constantine XIII, born at Athens in 1868, was the first Greek prince to be born on Greek soil since the fall of

<sup>1</sup> During the trial of two Greek officers who had made an attempt on his life in Paris

Byzantium. In all the homes of Greece, even the humblest, his birth was hailed as a symbolic event. To the crowd the eagle of Byzantium seemed to keep watch over the cradle of the Prince. A memorable resolution in Parliament conferred on him the title "Duke of Sparta": from that day on he became the actual and living embodiment of the great Hellenic idea. The Greek people followed with mystical fervour the growth of the Diadochus, seeing in him the prince predestined to wear the imperial crown under the splendid dome of St. Sophia.

This dream, the intuition of a people but lately released from a long and cruel servitude, was not sheer illusion. Constantine was within a very little of attaining the goal of his great destiny. But there are in destinies mysterious influences which guide and govern them.

His life was full of touching contrasts. When he was less than thirty years old in 1897, Delyannis naively made him Commander-in-Chief of an insignificant army, by means of which this credulous Minister thought to conquer the Ottoman Empire. The inevitable ensuing defeat weighed heavily on the young prince's popularity. But in 1911, at the time when Venizelos, still free from passions, was endowed with sound judgment, he (Venizelos) told the Chamber that, in case of war, the only man capable of effective command over the Greek army was the Crown Prince Constantine. In 1912 the Balkan wars broke out; what Venizelos had foreseen came true. Constantine, as Commander-in-Chief, led the Greek army for a year from victory to victory. He overthrew the Turkish army at the frontier and pursued it as far as Salonica, which he triumphantly set free. Then he turned to Epirus and brought his already considerable prestige to an army growing weary. He broke the obstinate resistance of the Turks before Jannina and carried the town by storm. But it was in the battle against the Bulgars at Kilkich in 1913 that he reached the height of his glory. Had it not been for this great victory, Greece would have lost Salonica and all Macedonia.

After Kilkich, Athens, delirious with joy, gave Constantine a triumphal reception; in his honour the standard of Byzantium was unfurled, and he was proclaimed the equal

of Basil the Bulgar-slayer. Henceforth the heart of Greece palpitated at the mere name of Constantine; for these two wars had brought to Greece moral and material benefits beyond all hope.

Constantine's great military qualities were of the moral type. In his army and in his country he exercised a powerful attraction and a dominant influence. He was handsome, and of truly royal presence. At the sight of him, his soldiers would hurl themselves heroically into the fight. There was a kind of fetishism in the excitement which troops felt at his presence. How many able generals have lost battles solely because they lacked this ascendancy over their men! A leader who won such brilliant and fruitful victories cannot have been the foolish and misguided person which his enemies painted during the Great War.

As a diplomat Constantine did his country two services beyond praise. It was he who, against Venizelos' advice, foresaw and made ready for the Second Balkan War. And during the first three years of the Great War, at the time when German military power was most to be feared, his prudent neutrality was able to avert from his country the disaster which befell Rumania. But to spare his country this disaster he had to sacrifice his throne and himself, for he had put himself in the path of selfish interests and of certain Great Powers. Could Constantine have given more tangible proof of his patriotic self-denial?

Constantine's prestige was, in 1921, still such that his mere presence at the front carried the Greek army away to the gates of Angora. But on his return to the throne the King was but the shadow of his old self. His strength had been impaired by illness and by the mental agony endured through years of calumny. Returning to Athens, he put absolute trust in the Ministers chosen for him by universal suffrage. Unfortunately, circumstances were of an unprecedented difficulty.

After the collapse of 1922, when the Venizelist officers profited by the confusion to compel the abdication of the King, whom they accused of isolating Greece diplomatically, Constantine withdrew without resisting, but with a protest that this diplomatic isolation was not his doing, but the

result of the diverging interests of the Great Powers. That is a truth which no one can now deny.

In the whirlwind of national disaster the Greek people hardly realized the fact of the deposition of its beloved King. Constantine went into exile. Prostrated by sickness, and deeply wounded by the blind arrogance of his triumphant opponents, he died not long after at Palermo.

Everywhere else Kings have been dethroned because they were unpopular. Constantine was twice dethroned because he was too popular.

A little before the death of this noble prince the Venizelist dictators, in whom all the instincts of primitive man had reawakened, thought to claim from Italy the extradition of the exiled King in order to shoot him. They only fell back before the physical impossibility of accomplishing their wicked design. Scandalous as it may seem, a well-known French writer in the *Journal des Débats*<sup>1</sup> regretted that the crime was not committed. To the honour of the civilized world, let us say that he was alone in this sentiment.

On King Constantine's death, Venizelism did not even allow his son and heir to fly his flag at half-mast on the palace, but the Greek people with one mind mourned in secret the Prince of its Byzantine dreams, the Prince who glimpsed the ramparts of Byzantium, but to whom the cruelty of fate gave a Venizelos as Minister.

It is as well that to-day indulgence and oblivion cast a veil over mistakes and falterings. That certain persons should think fit to gratify their rancour against the dead outrages decent feeling. To insult the dead is to offend what lies deepest in the heart of sympathetic humanity.

There has been an attempt to bury King Constantine under a heap of shame because he refused to hurl his people unconditionally and without precaution into the most terrible of all wars.<sup>2</sup> He was condemned without being tried, and pursued by blind and cowardly hatred, ambitious self-seeking and narrow and cruel nationalism. But his cause, long sacrificed, will prove stronger than hatred;

<sup>1</sup> See *Journal des Débats*, November, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> In French schools there are already history text-books in which Constantine is represented as a traitor.

public opinion is already beginning to see through the imposture. No one will be able to erase the emerging truth from History.

There are destinies at once noble and tragic before the mystery of whose unjust contrast the spirit of man, at once so proud and so weak, is dumbfounded. We ask ourselves in anguish and amazement how lives so upright could have been balanced by so painful an end. And what if, even after death, to the misunderstood nobility of a man's life there must be added the further bitterness of insults to his memory and the persecution of his heirs !

So the pseudo-republic, imposed in 1924 by military force in Greece—a country in which no republican movement had ever lifted its head—was only the additional and posthumous revenge of triumphant Venizelism against the dynasty of the man whom it had so unworthily slandered.

Constantine XII had what makes human greatness—serene uprightness and simplicity. During and after the War, his statements to foreign journalists were nothing but a desperate appeal to justice and reason. He will have the privilege of embodying to History, whose judgment he did not fear, the notion of the just and of the true : his name will live as a synonym for undeserved outrage and injustice undergone.

History will quote Constantine as one of the great Kings of Hellas, a worthy figure in its epic.



## INDEX OF NAMES

<p>d'Anade, General, 17          Adamov, A., 41          Alexander, Prince, 107, 283-6          Alexander, King, 293, 296, 305          Andrew, Prince, 200, 214          Asquith, H. H. (Lord Oxford), 110, 250          Avarov, 149          Balfour, Lord, 266-8          Bassewitz, 5          Benazet, 115, 237-48          Benckendorff, 180, 185, 236, 261          Bertie, Lord, 124, 230-2, 247          Billy, de, 219, 274-5, 292          Bissing, von, 107          Bolani, 211          Bonaparte, Prince Roland, 23          Bonnier, 190          Bosdari, Count, x, 145, 213, 218, 266, 273, 285, 304          Boussenot, Georges, 212          Braquet, Colonel, 190          Briand, 23, 27, 29, 56, 74, 86 sqq., 92, 98-9, 112, 124-8, 131-2, 136-7, 140, 145-6, 149-51, 159 sqq., 176 sqq., 192, 201, 207-8, 216-20, 228 sqq., 235-48, 256, 260, 262, 268, 311          Broglie, Duc de, 105          Burrows, Dr. R., 251</p>	<p>Chamondard, Captain, 203, 236-7, 240, 254, 257          Chocheprat, Admiral, 130          Churchill, Winston, 8, 314          Clausse, 295-6          Clemenceau, 55-6, 74, 123-5, 301          Clémentel, 180          Cochin, Denys, 88-9, 107-8, 112          Constantine, Crown Prince, 283-6, 310, 318, 320          Constantine, King, x, 1-8, 10-23, 26, 29-37, 41, 44-62, 66, 68-81, 84-5, 89, 95-6, 98, 101, 104, 106-9, 112-14, 119, 121-30, 133, 139-48, 158, 160, 164-6, 173, 176, 190, 193-201, 204-9, 213-24, 227-8, 232-9, 241-2, 244-53, 255, 259-64, 267-83, 285-93, 296, 298, 303-7, 310-22          Constantine Palaeologus, Emperor, 285          Crewe, Lord, 161-2          Cunningham, Lieut.-Col., 94, 113-14          Curzon, Lord, 44, 308-9, 312          Danglis, General, 223          Delcassé, 22-32, 51, 55, 57-8, 67          Delyannis, 321          Demidov, 23, 40, 55, 69, 89, 124-7, 145, 148, 182-7, 208, 216-18, 226, 234-5, 265-7, 270, 278, 281, 292, 295          Denmark, Prince William of, 101, 104, 106          Deville, 7, 9, 23, 114          Dimitrakopoulos, 214, 271          Dousmanis, General, 216, 289          Dragoumis, 32, 305          Eliot, Sir Francis, 7, 10, 23, 25, 52, 70, 85, 94-5, 110, 127, 132,</p>
---	---

149, 155, 157-8, 161, 174, 185,  
198, 208-9, 226, 256, 270, 282-4

d'Esperey, General Franchet, 114

Falkenhausen, Captain, 152

Falkenhayn, General von, 121, 123,  
138-9, 152, 168-70

Ferdinand, King of Bulgaria, 193

Foch, Marshal, 301, 308, 313

Fournet, Admiral Dartige du, 93,  
115, 117, 120, 133, 162, 199, 203  
sqq., 218, 221, 225-6, 229-31,  
236, 239, 243, 245, 252, 256 sqq.,  
262, 266

Fournier, L., 294

Franklin-Bouillon, 311

Gauchet, Admiral, 137, 262, 279

Gauvain, 15

Gennadius, 25-6, 70, 228

George, King, 145

George, Prince, of Greece, 23, 27-32,  
159, 198, 220

George, Lloyd, 44, 77-8, 271, 301-10,  
314

Gooch, G. P. 273

Gounaris, 15, 21, 23, 26-8, 33-4, 38,  
44-5, 154-5, 165, 176, 182, 289,  
307-10, 316

Graham, 281

Granville, Lord, 275-7

Grey, Lord, 9-10, 22-3, 26, 38-9,  
46, 52-3, 55, 57, 59, 67, 70-1, 124,  
161, 179, 182-6, 229-30, 234, 261

Guillemin, 26-7, 37, 51, 63, 86, 88-9,  
94-9, 114-15, 119, 127-8, 132, 146,  
155-8, 174-5, 179, 187, 190, 198,  
204, 206, 210-11, 216, 219-20, 223,  
228-9, 233-5, 239, 242, 245-8, 256,  
266-7, 274, 296

Haig, Lord, 206

Hamilton, Sir Ian, 17

Hardinge, Lord, 217

Herbette, 133

Herriot, 311

Hibben, Paxton, 139

Hindenburg, x, 273

Horologos, Sub-Lieut., 186

Hoyland, 150

Ismet Pasha, 313

Isvolsky, 89, 95, 124-6, 145, 160,  
179, 182-4, 187, 207, 216-18,  
223, 234-5, 261, 263, 266, 268-9  
271

Izkoul, 274

Jagow, von, 4, 27, 122-3, 136-8,  
168-9

Joffre, General, 58, 72-3, 180

Jonnart, 68, 107, 192, 224, 278-85,  
287-93, 295-6

Kalogeropoulos, 198, 214-16, 219,  
227-8, 271, 307, 317

Karapanos, 215-16

Kemal Pasha, 303-5, 308-10

Kerr, Philip, 308

Khatzopoulos, Col., 202-3

Kitchener, Lord, 108-10, 124-5,  
137

Knox, 202

Kondournotas, Admiral, 222-3

Kondyhs, Captain, 225

Lacaze, Admiral, 203, 217, 243, 256

Lambros, 227-8, 242, 244, 249, 255,  
272, 278, 289, 317

Lansdowne, Marquis of, 72

Law, Bonar, 194

Levques, 307, 311

Ludendorff, x

Mackensen, 168, 170, 173

Maizière, 164

Mandols, Lieut de, 211

Margerie, de, 150-1

Mavrogordato, 194

Melas, Major, 37

Mercatus, 50-1, 253, 267

Metaxas, Col., 289

Milhaud, 311

Millerand, 56, 302

Milne, General, 190

Mirbach, von, 24, 85, 92, 170-2

Moschopoulo, General, 94, 176

Munro, General, 113

Neratov, 260-1  
 Nicholas, Prince, 200  
 Nicholas, Tsar, 216, 219, 261, 269  
 Outhwaite, 55  
 Painlevé, 74, 277  
 Réélogue, 220  
 Pashitch, 43, 65  
 Passarov, 69, 154-5  
 Paul, Prince, 306  
 Peter, King of Serbia, 296  
 Plastiras, Col., 311  
 Poincaré, 24, 29-31, 248, 301, 309, 313  
 Politis, 43, 66, 69, 100, 112-14, 146, 187, 193, 240, 291  
 Price, Crawfurd, 37  
 Radio Agency, 40-1  
 Radoslavov, 46  
 Rallis, 182, 307  
 Recouly, 294  
 Regnault, General, 282, 294  
 Rentis, 291-3  
 Repington, Col., 194  
 Ribot, 74, 269, 271-2, 277, 279, 282-4, 288, 291-3, 296  
 Rocques, 180, 236, 240, 242-3, 248  
 Romanos, 24-6, 28-9, 31-2, 86-7, 99, 128, 162, 218, 228  
 Roquetaul, Captain de, 116-17, 119-21, 162, 208-10, 212-13, 218, 220-2, 229, 236-8, 243, 252, 256, 258-9, 265, 290  
 Rosenberg, 153  
 Sariyannis, Col., 308  
 Sarrai, General, 56, 72-4, 80, 82-3, 97-9, 111-13, 121-4, 135-7, 147, 150, 162-3, 166, 176-7, 190-2, 196-7, 200-1, 205-6, 217-19, 223-4, 234, 237, 240, 258, 266-7, 270-3, 277-81, 293, 317  
 Schenck, Baron von, 40-2, 60, 116-17, 149-50, 165, 186, 207, 211  
 Sombat, Marcel, 43  
 Skouloudis, 21, 56, 69, 76-81, 84-93, 108-13, 119-20, 123, 130-2, 135-9, 146-61, 166-87, 191-4, 216, 244, 285, 289, 305, 317  
 Sonnino, 146, 180, 219, 261, 266, 271, 277-8  
 Sophia, Queen, 118, 263, 273, 287  
 Stavridi, Sir John, 77-8  
 Streit, 6, 7, 216  
 Sturmer, 234  
 Szilassy, 85  
 Tardieu, 56, 101, 114  
 Teretchenko, 278, 281, 283, 290  
 Theotokis, 27, 122-3, 136-9, 153, 167-8, 170, 200  
 Thomas, Albert, 283  
 Thursby, Admiral, 203  
 Trikoupis, Col., 206  
 Turot, 43, 128, 148, 160, 164-5, 213  
 Venizelos, 1-3, 6-22, 27, 32-3, 35-6, 41-58, 61-70, 74-85, 90-2, 100, 106-7, 110, 114-18, 120, 126-8, 143-4, 147-9, 154, 159-60, 163-5, 173-5, 182-3, 185, 187, 189-200, 202, 204-12, 215-22, 232, 234-7, 239-46, 249-51, 258, 261-78, 280, 283-4, 287-8, 291-308, 310-13, 314, 317-323  
 Viviani, 69, 73  
 William II, Emperor, 4-6, 33, 47, 54, 119-22, 190, 263, 267, 273, 276  
 Wilson, President, 172, 266  
 Wilson, Sir Henry, 304, 313-14  
 Zaharof, Sir Basil, 128  
 Zaimis, 20, 61-2, 65-6, 71, 75-8, 83, 176, 195-205, 208-15, 271-2, 274-93, 317  
 Zalokostas, 228, 260, 268  
 Zographos, 23-7, 31, 34  
 Zymbrakakis, Lieut.-Col., 206